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Master's Thesis of Geography

**THE MARRIAGE MIGRATION REGIME OF  
VIETNAMESE WOMEN IN SOUTH KOREA:  
Evolving Role of Governments, Brokers and  
Marriage Migrants**

한국에 베트남 결혼 이주 여성 레짐:  
정부, 중개업자, 이주여성의 역할의 진화

August 2019

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**July 2019**

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## **Abstract**

The research analyses the regime of Vietnamese women who have got married to Korean men and migrated to South Korea. The regime includes two Governments, marriage brokers and migrants. The regime started as two Governments' policies (either intentionally or unintentionally) came to be interwoven and created such a friendly environment for international marriage between two countries' citizen. At the same time, marriage brokers and marriage migrant women themselves make the best use of this policy-interaction and complete the marriage regime. The "regime" concept has been applied quite a lot in migration studies which focused on surrounding actors influencing on migrants but at the same time also take the agency of migrants as the main actor in their migrating decision. Even though many previous studies have been employing the regime concept, they were mainly focusing on migrants in general and worker migrants. Marriage migrants has been considered as individual action. Among main streams of marriage migration in the world, there is one stream which is marriage migration between Vietnamese women and Korean men. Dozens of previous studies have been researching on this topic as it was always in public and academic's attention for more than a decade. Many of them focused on migration motivation, economic and social impacts of out-migration back to the natal families and society, as well as marriage migrants' adaptation in the maternal society; however, they looked at the role of each actor individually in marriage migration. This research observes collaboration among actors in the whole picture of marriage migration between Vietnamese women and Korean men. The research asks the following questions: (1) How did the cooperation in policy regulations form the marriage migration regime? (2) How have migrants and brokers made use of this cooperation and develop the regime?

To answer these questions, I carried out archival studies, policy analysis, direct participant observation and in-depth interviews. Since there is a huge number of Vietnamese marriage migrant women in South Korea, I was able to contact the interview pool in which marriage women had arrived at South Korea in different time to make the findings have the most overview look. At the same time, meeting potential marriage candidates in Vietnam helps to complete the whole picture over time. Based on the fieldwork, I argue that two Governments play the important role, either intentionally or unintentionally, in

creating the environment for marriage migration develop. Reacting to that environment, brokers and marriage migrant themselves make the best use of this cooperation and complete the marriage migration regime. In the end, it is found that brokers play the huge important in not only matching couples and documents procedures. At the same time, marriage migrant women are improving their independency and confidence in their decision-making.

**Keywords:** Marriage Migration, Marriage Migration Regime, Marriage Migrant Women, Vietnam, South Korea, International Marriage,

**Student Number:** 2017-24551

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

This research analyses how governments, brokers and marriage migrants formed and developed the marriage migration regime for Vietnamese marriage migrant women in South Korea. ‘Marriage migration regime’ refers to the original regime approach, which is well known by Krasner’s definition as ‘networks of rules, norms, and procedures that regularize behavior and control its effects’. The regime concept has been quite popular in migration studies; however, broadening in the case of marriage migrant women will be the first time. This research, therefore, will employ the migration regime to conceptualize the case of Vietnamese marriage migrant women in Korea. This regime was first formed by the consequential cooperation between two countries’ policies on marriage with foreign actor, which created the background for the growth of international marriage. Later on, marriage brokers and marriage migrant women themselves make use of this framework and make this significant. Brokers, in this study, can be individuals or companies who take parts in matchmaking a woman and a male for a marriage. Their participation can be in arranging a meeting or document procedure. It can be profit or non-profit. As a result, the combination between governments, brokers and marriage migrants formed the regime in which each of them become part of it. However, it is noteworthy that it is not that each actor do cooperate to each other. They pursue their own interests and, as a result, they cooperate. The environment of international marriage between Vietnamese women and Korea men then become much friendly to and welcoming potential applicant.

The presence of Vietnamese marriage migrants nowadays has become more visible than ever. More specifically, they make up the largest percentage of foreign wives at 27.9 per cent, outnumbering Chinese women as spouses in multicultural marriages with South Korean men since 2017<sup>1</sup>. At the same time, the data analysis shows that more than 90% of marriages in 2017 are marriages between Vietnamese women and Korean men; only less than 10% are Vietnamese men marrying to Korean women. The domination of marriage between Vietnamese women and Korean men can be explained as the international marriage market is mediated by brokers who make the best use out of the shortage for brides of Korean men as well as the ambition to change the life of Vietnamese women from rural areas in Vietnam. However, the

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<sup>1</sup> The 2017 Marriage - Divorce Statistics at <http://kosis.kr>

argument here is how actors cooperated to create the friendly environment for transnational marriage and especially, for the domination of brokers, even though broker is illegal in Vietnam according to Decree No. 68/2002/ND-CP on Marriage and Family Law Involving Foreigners in Vietnam<sup>2</sup>.

A number of research has been looking at the topic of Vietnamese marriage migrant women in South Korea. Most of them looked at migration motivation, post-marriage natal and maternal societies' transformation, as well as marriage migrants' adaption in the host society. Most of the findings stated that marriage migration is mainly motivated by economic reason and aspired by individual in which the home society's life has been improving thanks to remittances (Binh, 2013; Phan, 2005; Hugo G; Nguyen Thi Hong Xoan, 2006; Tran, 2006; Nguyen Xoan; Tran Xuyen, 2010). Nevertheless, recent papers focus on the adaptation of Vietnamese marriage migrants in the South Korean society by discovering the new form of place-making of these marriage women or strengthening the difficulties marriage migrants faced in the host society such as discrimination, violence or the hardness during the process of educating children (Binh, 2013; Thao, 2016; Kim Yulli; Shin HaeRan, 2018).

A number of studies focused on govern-mobility which is referred to the drive of the government on the topic of marriage migration. For example, Korean Government's efforts to support marriage migration; such as: implementing the policy on making a 'multicultural, multiethnic Korean society' in 2005 (Kim Yulli; Shin HaeRan, 2018) (Kim Y. , 2009); (Lee H.-K. , 2008) (Timothy, 2010) or adjusting the policies on Vietnam – Korea marriage by requiring language ability for Vietnamese brides, health-economic conditions for Korean husbands or strengthening the activities of Korean marriage brokers companies. At the same time, the domination of brokers in matchmaking transnational marriages and how were they demonized by academia were discussed, not as the main topic but mentioned in several researches such as (Hong-zen Wang; Shu-ming Chang, 2002); (Tuyen, 2010); (Yang, 2011); (Johan Lindquist; Biao Xiang; Brenda S.A. Yeoh, 2012).

Above mentioned studies have quite fully covered the journey of the marriage migrant women since they left the hometown in Vietnam to arrive and

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<sup>2</sup> Referred at [www.vbpl.vn/TW/Pages/vbpqen.aspx](http://www.vbpl.vn/TW/Pages/vbpqen.aspx)

settled down their lives in South Korea. Each of studies has mentioned each actor participating individually in the decision-making process or during the whole journey of marriage women. This study pays special attention to actors that make marriage migration work. Among many actors, there are three key actors participating in making this phenomenon, which are Governments, both Vietnamese and South Korean; brokers, both in Vietnam and South Korea and marriage migrant women themselves. According to previous studies, the role of Government has been mentioned as and through governance and especially the Korean Government in actively issuing the policies on “multicultural – multi-ethnic society” or international marriage and marriage immigration; for marriage migrant women, their participation has studied as they migrated mainly for the economic reason and brought back positive changes for the natal society. At the same time, notwithstanding brokers were mentioned as a crucial actor in marriages between Vietnamese women and Korean men, there has not been many studies specializing on the actor of broker.

However, there have not been enough studies study the combination of these actors behind Vietnamese marriage migrant women’ journey to Korea. To study more about this combination, I employ Krasner’s regime approach for conceptualization. In migration study, the concept of regime ‘promises fresh insights and a deeper understanding for a number of problems that international migration scholars has been struggling with for decades (Kenneth Horvath; Anna Amelina; Karin Peters, 2017). First and foremost, the capacity of regime notions is to draw our attention to not only the contradictions that arise between the different scales (Godfried Engbersen; Arjen Leerkes; Peter Scholten; Erik Snel, 2007) but also the interplay of state and non-state actors in framing migration policies (Samers, 2016).

In the case of Vietnamese marriage migrant women, different scales are representative at national scale (policy issuing) and local scale (local government of brides); as well as state actor as the Government and non-state actors are marriage brokers company, non-governmental organization and migrant. Furthermore, this perspective allows us to take the agency of migrants – who respond to, contest and circumvent control practices – into accounts (Dimitris Papadopoulos; Vassilis Tsianos, 2013), thus helping to avoid perceiving migrants merely as passive actors and countering tendencies of oversimplification and of victimization (Horvath, 2012).

This study then to answer two questions, which are (1) How did the cooperation in policy regulations form the marriage migration regime? (2) How have migrants and brokers made use of this cooperation and develop the regime?

In relation to the first research question, the ‘friendly atmosphere’, which we once mentioned in above, was first and foremost created by interacting policies on marriage and migration from two Governments. In the side of Korea, the Korean Government made it publicize as proposing the policy on making the Korean society to become a ‘multicultural – multiethnic society’ in 2006. As well as, for a long time, the Government has legalized the activities of marriage brokers, which resulted the number of marriage between Korean men and Vietnamese women grow significantly. Not only supporting policies, Korea Government’s participation in law is also shown as the government has issued laws in adjusting or tighten up the immigration policy such as requiring language ability for marriage migrant women or health-economic condition for Korean husbands.

In contrast, the Vietnamese Government seems to have less clear messages about this topic. According to the Vietnamese law on marriage involved foreign actor, all the marriage broker businesses are prohibited. However, during last ten years, the majority of marriages between Vietnam women and South Korean are mainly managed by illegal brokers. At the same time, the penalty amount of illegal matchmaking activities is quite small compared to the profit that brokers can make. In 2016, the Vietnamese Government took a very first step in recognizing the non-profit marriage matchmaking job indicated to women support centers in locals in Vietnam. Passive activities of Vietnamese Government seems to show that both of the central and local Vietnamese Government try to promote the transnational marriage in order to reduce poverty. At the same time, the existing corruption and under-table payments in reality do no helps in controlling the situation. Thus, continuously repaired transnational policies on marriage migration of Korean Government and unresponsive Vietnamese Government make a first step in building the foundation for the ‘marriage migration regime’.

Regarding the second research question, documented/undocumented brokers and active migrants are argued as actors completing the regime for marriage migration. They are documented brokers in South Korea as they are recognized by the Korean law, but undocumented in Vietnam as doing business

in marriage matchmaking is totally forbidden. The brokers activities are under control of the Governments, for example in the case of Korea. The Korean Government legalized the marriage matchmaking job. At the same time, in return, brokers dominating activities also ask the Government to continuously repair the policy. In Vietnam even though brokers business activities are illegal, brokers still can find the way to manage their job and the procedure, hence, was often made under the table payments (Daniele Belanger; Tran Giang Linh, 2011). Notwithstanding recognized as legal as if under control of women supporting centers in local government and activate without profit, the major of marriage is still go through illegal brokers.

The quality of the independency of a marriage woman migrant is being considered in which they are increasingly acknowledgeable about what is a transnational marriage, they later became voluntary in their decision-making. The huge phenomenon of marrying Korean men has been building an idea of transnational marriage in a woman of recent generation. They choose to be a marriage migrant because most of them wanted to do that. However, even though the reason for international marriage in general and with Korean men in particularly is getting diverse, the main reason for marriages is still of economic. Many of them, marriage migrant women, were looking for a better life which is healthier and more wealthy. The dominance of marriage brokers and the independent and active marriage migrant women thus fully complete the regime of marriage migration between Korean men and Vietnamese women.

The methodology of the present research is of qualitative. The methodology consists of archival studies, policy analysis, direct participant observation in Korean classes for Vietnamese brides and NGOs working on marriage migration area in Vietnam, as well as broker offices in Korea, and in-depth interviews.

Digging into archives and analyzing the policy provided the deep understanding of the concept of regime theoretically and the case of Vietnamese marriage migrant women in South Korea in particularly. These studies, therefore, effectively contributed for the literature review section of the research. The main body parts, which are finding chapters, are composed of research developed primarily through policy analysis, personal observation and interviews. More specifically, the first finding on the interaction between policy on international marriage and immigrants of two Government will be written

based on policy analysis. Personal observation and interviews were taken with twenty marriage migrants, broker, governmental official, and activist contributing in constructing both the first and the second finding.

The field work is carried out from November 2018 to February 2019 in both of two countries Vietnam and South Korea. Fifteenth interviews are conducted with marriage migrants who migrated to Korea between the early of 2000s to the most recent cases in 2012. Interviewees are asked in Vietnamese about their journey since they decided to marry their Korean husband, migrated to Korea and settled their lives here. Other interviews taken in Korea are with marriage broker and migrant activist. During January 2019, interviews with candidates in Vietnam have started, who are marriage migrant women candidates, non-governmental organization managers.

This thesis is divided into seven chapters, including this introductory one. The second chapter critically reviews the current literature that deals with topics relating migration regime and Vietnamese marriage migrant women in South Korea. First, the chapter focuses on previous studies within marriage migration literature, highlighting the fact that the concept of regime has been widely used in migration studies, notwithstanding, have not been applied in the case of marriage migration. Second, the chapter involves a summarization of previous studies on Vietnamese marriage migrants in South Korea in which individually focus on each single actor in the whole marriage migration picture. Third, I suggested the theoretical framework of regime to work on the transnational cooperation between Governments, brokers and marriage migrants later, which is called “marriage migration regime”. The marriage migration regime considers multiple actors which influence on marriage migration regime. Even though each of them does their own job to meet their own interest, in the end, these influences interact and make a result as creating a “marriage migration regime” of Vietnamese women in South Korea.

The third chapter of this research serves an introduction to the case study. The chapter offers a brief history and current status of Vietnamese marriage migrants in South Korea. The first marriage cases were way back in the end of the 1990s and later became a phenomenon since the second half of the 2000s started. Noteworthy, the phenomenon of marrying foreign men first started with marrying Taiwanese men, instead of Korean men. This chapter, therefore, manages the historical start with the topic of Vietnamese women

married to Taiwanese men as well. The next chapter specifically describes the methodology of this research. This chapter focuses on introducing methods, studying sites, as well as introducing the migrant women participating in this research.

The fifth chapter is the starting point for the research findings of this study and is titled, 'The emergence of marriage migration regime'. This section mainly focuses on policies which both Governments issued and adjusted on the topic of international marriage and immigration throughout the flow of history. As well as, the chapter describes the change in marriage procedure between the first generation in the 1990s and recent generation along with the policy change.

The sixth chapter, titled 'The development of the regime: Formalization as a response to the policy regulations', figures out how has transnational brokers team, developed and mediated the marriages, even though brokers are illegal in Vietnam. Throughout the process that brokers are working, the chapter emphasizes the crucial role of brokers in matchmaking most of the marriages between Vietnamese women and Korean men. On the other hand, the quality of the independency of marriage migrant women is being considered in which they came to increasingly acknowledge about what a transnational marriage is, they later became voluntary in their decision-making. Crucial role of marriage brokers as well as the active participation of migrants themselves thus complete the marriage migration regime. This chapter also managed to study about marriage motivation of marriage migrant women throughout the different generations.

Finally, the seventh chapter of this work is made up for the section of final conclusions. It gives a summary of what have said in the body chapters and addresses recommendations as well as new possible areas and approaches for the future study of this topic.



## **Chapter 2. Literature review and theoretical framework on Vietnamese marriage migrant women in South Korea**

### **2.1. Previous Studies on Marriage Migration and Vietnamese Marriage Migrant Women in South Korea**

Marriage migration is the decade-old topic. Marriage migration usually refers to cross-border, international or transnational marriages (Duong Bach Le; Thanh-Dam Truong; Thu Hong Khuat, 2014). The noteworthy point here is the gender imbalance wherein it is mostly women undergoing the migration (Wen-Shan Yang; Melody Chia-Wen Lu, 2010). For example, in the case of Vietnamese marriage migration in South Korea, the number of Vietnamese women marrying Korean men accounted more than 95% of the Vietnam-Korea marriages almost the time according to the 2005 marriage - divorce data of Korea Population and Social Statistics Bureau.

Previous studies on marriage migration have pinpointed to structural forces that push women to marriage migration while others have supplemented ethnographic research on agency and empowerment by examining individual strategies in the face of marriage migration and social integration (Kim Yulli; Shin HaeRan, 2018). Many studies pointed out the great contribution of Vietnamese brides to their natal families' economic condition. They said that the main cause behind the marriage migration for Vietnamese women is defined as the poverty in rural areas of Vietnam (PhanA, 2005) (TranV.P., 2006) (Hugo G; Nguyen Thi Hong Xoan, 2006) (Nguyen Xoan; Tran Xuyen, 2010). Thus, these researches theoretically viewed Vietnamese brides as labor migrants and marriage migration as one of their livelihood to archive for the economic betterment (BinhPham, 2013) (PhanA, 2005) (Hugo G; Nguyen Thi Hong Xoan, 2006) (Nguyen Xoan; Tran Xuyen, 2010).

In another context, Kim H.J. (2007) and Song (2008) noted that the main determinant of Vietnamese brides' migration is individual aspiration; and the involvement of parents in decision-making is rarely found. At the same time, Kim H.J. (2007) expressed great concern about Vietnamese brides' low educational level, he then proposed the special supports for Vietnamese brides to help them adapt to the Korean society.

Structural forces or individuals have been the main focuses of many previous studies, however, it is criticized as only reflecting one side of the topic. The idea of viewing international marriage as a decision of individual and a part of labor migration generalized marriage migration instead of helping to understand its specialties. Therefore, a focus on actors, for example states or marriage migrants, is important for the deeper understanding of international marriage.

Besides researches on migrant themselves and motivations back to the natal society, scholars also have mentioned about the Korean government participation in marriage migration. The South Korean government upgraded the 'foreigner problem' to the level of presidential directive in 2005 and formally declared a shift to a 'multicultural, multiethnic society' in 2006 (Kim Y. , 2009). The government orchestrated support for vision to 'socially integrate foreign wives and attain a multicultural society' (Lee H.-K. , 2008); (Timothy, 2010). This plan promises the government's commitment to: (1) regulate international marriage agencies; (2) support victims of domestic violence; (3) offer Korean language and culture classes; (4) provide access to broader social welfare and (5) raise awareness of multicultural issues at a larger scale.

In the context of the Vietnamese government, even though marriage migration has become a great concern in Vietnam, detailed and official data on the out-migrated Vietnamese brides have been very limited (Binh, 2013). The only and one governmental research was conducted back in 2004 by the Committee of Population, Family and Children, collaborating with Department of Sociology, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Ho Chi Minh National University. However, rather than focus on brides, the survey was conducted mainly on family members of marriage emigrants. Regulating international marriage agencies leads to the legally legal presence of private marriage brokers, combined with state-sponsored programs of multicultural families, have all facilitated the rapid increase of marriage migration between Vietnamese women and Korean men (Kim Yulli; Shin HaeRan, 2018). In the context of Vietnam, the increase of marriage emigrants is also closely related to the proliferation of marriage brokers in the renovation time of the country (Binh, 2013). The system of marriage brokers is remarked as well organized and closely connected with marriage brokers in destination countries (Hong-zen Wang; Shu-ming Chang, 2002). However, it is noteworthy that the

marriage agencies are illegal in Vietnam (Hong-zen Wang; Shu-ming Chang, 2002) (Tuyen, 2010) (Yang, 2011), notwithstanding nobody can estimate how many brokers are now in operation in Vietnam (Binh, 2013). (Johan Lindquist; Biao Xiang; Brenda S.A. Yeoh, 2012) takes the migration broker as starting point for investigating contemporary regimes of transnational migration across Asia. According to Johan et al., large parts of Asia – including China, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, Vietnam, as well as New Zealand – show that marriage migration, student migration and various forms of unskilled labor migration, including predominantly male plantation and construction work and female domestic, entertainment and sex work, are all mediated by brokers. The paper also pointed out that academic researchers, non-governmental organizations and policy-makers generally demonize formal brokers in debates concerning the regulation of transnational migration (Johan Lindquist; Biao Xiang; Brenda S.A. Yeoh, 2012). Some studies also criticized external institutions such as marriage brokers (Constable, 2005) benefit on disparities among national politics and the lack of marriageable women among certain groups of men in these countries to continue marriage migration practices that borderline on human trafficking (Lee H. , 2018).

It is evident from the findings referred to in this chapter that (1) most of transnational marriage is motivated by economic reason; (2) notwithstanding marriage migration decision-makings are individual inspiration, both Korean and Vietnamese governments play important roles in the massive increase in numbers of marriages between two countries' citizens. Korean policies on legalizing and regulating brokers and Vietnamese policies on illegalizing but lack of management lead to (3) the domination of brokers in matchmaking international marriage migration.

Therefore, previous studies of the topic of Vietnamese marriage migrant women have pointed out three important actors which are Governments, marriage migrant and brokers. However, each of them was studied individually and have been hardly analyzed together. This study, thus, will propose the 'marriage migration regime' concept to explore the interactions between these actors. The next section will introduce this theoretical framework of marriage migration regime.

## **2.2. Theoretical Framework of Marriage Migration Regime**

In this research, I proposed a ‘marriage migration regime’ which refers to the original ‘regime’ concept which is used effectively in migration study. Krasner (1982) first defined regime as the category of methods used to manage activities under one’s rule. However, it is not the only relevant conceptualization of regime. Kenneth et al. (2017) argued that ‘regime is not a unified concept’, it has been developed in different strands of theory building. As a result, the regime perspectives entering into the field of migration research vary widely. The regime understanding has been built into 4 strands which are: Krasner (1982)’s terminology in the field of international relations, in the field of social policy with the best illustrated example of Esping-Andersen (1990) seminal typology of welfare regimes, Fordist and Post-Fordist regimes of accumulation (Robert Boyer; Yves Sairard (eds.), 2002) and the regime-theoretical approach in govern-mentality studies. Notwithstanding their ‘ontological and epistemological foundations’ are diverse, each of them serves a significant role in current migration research (Kenneth Horvath; Anna Amelina; Karin Peters, 2017).

Robert Owen Keohane and Joseph S. Nye (1977) were the first ones to develop the regime in the field of international relations, which is probably the most influential regime theory. This approach is applied in international trade agreements, monetary regulations and environmental on an international scale (Krasner, 1982) (Kenneth Horvath; Anna Amelina; Karin Peters, 2017). Krasner’s definition on regime mentioned above about the network of rule, norms and procedures that one use to act or conduct oneself, especially toward others, was also developed in this theoretical strand. At the same time, this strand is the background for the most popular understanding of regimes among migration research, which was introduced by Gosh (2000) and Michael Jandl; Irene Stacher; Jonas Widgren (2004) as an international migration regime (Kenneth et al., 2017).

Again, “regime is not a unified concept” (Kenneth Horvath et al., 2017), however, the variety of regime notions provides diverse ways to employ this theory into many categories of topics of migration studies. At the same time, using a regime perspective might allow to add sociological and ethnographic stances to the analysis of political dynamics, hence bridging the politics of migration and the practices of mobility and settlement (Sciortino G. a., 2000)

(Zolberg, 1999) (Virginie Guiraudon; Christian Joppke, 2001)). However, which kind of regime notion should be applied in each subject is needed to be considerable conscientiously. It is needed to be aware of these disciplinary and methodological traditions when using the term in one way or another; different approach draw different conclusion (Kenneth Horvath; Anna Amelina; Karin Peters, 2017).

International migration – in all its different forms – has never been an simple individual decision but rather the combination of many actors having their own influences on the long migratory process. As Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller (2009) stated in their book in 2009, the migratory process sumps up the complex sets of factors and interactions that causes international migration and influence its course. For the purpose of this thesis, the ‘regime’ concept when applied in the case of marriage migration refers to the consequential transnational cooperation between Governments, brokers and marriage migrants continuously repaired influencing on migrants’ decision-making and marriage procedure. Each of these actors has been mentioned in many previous researches in the past, either separately or collectively.

First, state actor has been mentioned in the historical-structural approach and world systems theory, which were introduced in the 1970s and 1980s. Because of an unequal distribution of economic and political power in the world, migration was viewed as a way of mobilizing cheap labor for capital rather than the voluntary migration (Stephen Castles; Mark J. Miller, 2009). This uneven distribution in the world can also be related to the migration systems theory which emerged since the 1990s with its first root in geography. According to this, migratory movements generally arise from the existence of prior links between sending and receiving countries based on colonization, political influence, trade, investment or cultural ties (Stephen Castles; Mark J. Miller, 2009).

State actor was also mentioned in the use of regime theory in the field of social policy. In social policy, the regime theory has developed and is best demonstrated by Esping-Andersen’ seminal typology of welfare regimes (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Esping-Andersen’s theoretical notion focuses on national scale, institutional configurations and path-dependencies; as well as ‘the emphasis is on comparative research with nation-states as units, drawing on different kinds of data from administrative and survey data to legal

documents' (Kenneth Horvath; Anna Amelina; Karin Peters, 2017). Many of works on the relations between migration regimes and welfare policies are informed by this kind of regime understanding. Some of them are Sainsbury's (2006) on immigrants social rights; Sciortino G. (2004) on immigration in a Mediterranean Welfare State; Carl-Ulrik Schierup; Peo Hansen; and Stephen Castles (2006) with the analysis of migration, citizenship and the European Welfare State; or Jenson (1997) in Canada's changing citizenship regimes. Another research is of Faist (1995) which also focuses on the level of national policies and legal/administrative regulations (Kenneth Horvath; Anna Amelina; Karin Peters, 2017).

The French regulation school is well known for its analyses of Fordist and Post-Fordist regimes of accumulation (Kenneth Horvath; Anna Amelina; Karin Peters, 2017). By understanding that the liberal state is not conceived as a fixed entity but rather as a set of social relations, this perspective proposes that policies are inter-independent from power, domination and inequality (Kenneth Horvath; Anna Amelina; Karin Peters, 2017). Sandro Mezzadra; Brett Neilson (2013) pointed out that most studies informed by this kind of regime perspective focus on actual practices of control and mobility, pointing among others to the autonomous agency of migrants in contesting and circumventing control measures. Hence, a lot of ethnographic research employ this understanding, especially with an interdisciplinary stance such as human geography, anthropology and political science (BartelsInken, 2017) (ScheelStephan, 2017)

The govern-mentality studies may be seen as a regime-theoretical approach in its own right, which drives our attention to the contingent political rationalities that inform the political technologies that are used for the governing of human mobility (Kenneth Horvath; Anna Amelina; Karin Peters, 2017). The notions of governing can be employed in analyses of the governing of borders and mobility, such as Walters (2006) work on border controls or the proposal of Nicholas De Genova; Nathalie Peutz (eds.) (2010) on the notion of deportation regimes (Kenneth Horvath; Anna Amelina; Karin Peters, 2017).

Second, migrants have been mentioned in a number of previous studies on migration. For example, the neoclassical theory has rooted since the earliest generation of migration theory which was back to the nineteenth-century geographer Ravenstein and his statistical laws of migration (Stephen Castles;

Mark J. Miller, 2009) (RavensteinErnst, The laws of migration, 1885) (RavensteinErnst, The laws of migration, 1889). This approach are often known as “push-pull” theories, which assumes that migration decisions are overwhelmed by the economic factors and the migrants know exactly the wave levels, employment opportunities in destination places (Stephen Castles; Mark J. Miller, 2009). Meanwhile the neoclassical theory is individualistic, the new economics of labor migration approach, which is also included in economical migration theory, refers to the collectiveness. The theory arose in the 1980s and argued that the migration decisions are made by families, households or even communities rather than isolated individuals (Stephen Castles; Mark J. Miller, 2009) (TaylorJ., 1987) (OdedStark, 1991).

These economic approaches are different in which the neoclassical theory focuses on individual wage maximization, while the new economics concentrates on collective decisions concerned with a much wider range of factors (Stephen Castles; Mark J. Miller, 2009). Even though these approaches seem to be mainly applied in the cases of labor migration, it does relate to marriage migration, especially in the case of marriage migrants migrate from developing areas to the developed regions. As their aims are to improve their lives, send remittances back to homes and help their natal families, thus, their migration are able to be explained under these economic approaches.

Third, the broker actor in the marriage migration regime refers to ‘meso-structure’ which was mentioned in (Stephen Castles; Mark J. Miller, 2009).

If the economic approaches focus on the migrant themselves or their neighbor surrounding, but downplayed the role of the state, and neglected the history-related factors, the historical structural approach pays more attention to the world and the state’s order but not human agency (Stephen Castles; Mark J. Miller, 2009). These two, then, as Castles and Miller stated in their book that they seemed too one-sided to analyze the complexity of migration. The combination of economic theories and historical-structural theory can be helpful for understanding the migratory picture with the large-scale institutional factors – state and the micro-structures – individuals, migrants themselves. However, the actor plays a role in linking these two scales has not mentioned yet, which is the intermediate mechanisms. They could be anyone from individuals to groups or institutions; at the same time, they could be both

helpers or exploiters of migrants (Stephen Castles; Mark J. Miller, 2009). These intermediates then are referred to as “meso-structures”.

As Castle and Miller proposed, as these macro-, meso- and micro-structures are combined, the whole picture of migratory process is sketched. This combination then help to study the picture of migration in various dimensions and in all its different forms, including marriage migration. Marriage migration, notwithstanding, has been criticized as not having enough attention within migration studies. However, the branch of marriage migration is promised to be a best implication of such combination above. The findings of this study will address the interactions between macro-, meso- and micro-structures that happen visibly in marriage migration.

What I argue, is even though migrants are the ones who make their choices, their decision are under the pressure of a range of factors including multi-governments, brokers, and networks. By employing the lens of ‘marriage migration regime’, the paper looks at migration decision-making under interacting influences of actors, as well as how it has been changed since the first Vietnamese marriage migrant female in the 1990s. The government is argued that not only directly influencing on migration through the policies but also on the work of brokers and marriage migrants’ perceptions. At the same time, changing in governments’ policies during the time lead to the fluctuating activities of mediators and the way marriage migrants participated in the mobility. The next chapter will be presenting the general view on Vietnamese brides in Korea in detailed.



## **Chapter 3. Case Background: Vietnamese marriage migrant women in South Korea**

### **3.1. Renovation and the start of international marriage**

International marriage might start in Vietnam from a long time ago. However, international marriage via broker and motivated by economic reason has just started and increased after the Government of Vietnam implemented the Renovation – Doi Moi<sup>3</sup> in 1986 (Binh, 2013).

International marriage via brokers has a long history in Vietnam, especially in the Southern Vietnam during the Vietnam War. During the time the United States established a government in Sai Gon and a lot of American officers landed in Vietnam for their duty, there were many cases of Vietnamese women marrying to American (Danielle Antoinette Hidalgo, Carl L. Bankston, 2008). As following the style of American capitalism, people in the South were becoming more open-minded, westernized and less conservative than people in the North (Chen, 2006). At the same time, since the Vietnam War, people in the South were already getting familiar with international marriage.

In 1986, Vietnam started the Renovation in every aspect of the country. Vietnam opened their market, welcomed foreign investors as well as new cultural perspectives. Taiwan was one of the first investors to come to Vietnam with its Go South Policy (Hsu T.-T. K., 2016).

Taiwanese's earliest reported foreign investment to Southeast Asia was actually back in the 1950s as Taiwanese enterprises started to expand their businesses in the neighbor region through business networks based mainly on ethnic Chinese in these countries. Before 1994, the Go South policy was launched focusing mainly on Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia (Hsu T.-t. K., 2017). In 1994, Taiwanese government officially launched the Go South Policy focusing on the Southeast Asian countries as well as economic resources with these nations (Hugo G; Nguyen Thi Hong Xoan, 2006). In March of this year, Taiwan's Ministry of Economic Affairs (MOEA) proposed a three year "Work Plans for Enhancing Economic Ties and Trade in Southeast Asia", which was

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<sup>3</sup> Đổi Mới (English: "Renovation") is the name given to the economic reforms initiated in Vietnam in 1986 with the goal of creating a socialist-oriented market economy.

approved quickly by the Executive Yuan<sup>4</sup>. The Work Plans<sup>5</sup>, retrospectively effective from January 1, 1994 covered Seven Southeast Asian countries, including the six original ASEAN<sup>6</sup> Member States and the Socialist country Vietnam, which only began to open its doors to foreign direct investment (FDI) after the Vietnamese Communist Party decided to adopt the Doi Moi, or the Renovation Policy in 1986 (Hsu T.-t. K., 2017). As ethnic Chinese has migrated and lived for a long time in the South of Vietnam (mainly distributed in Ho Chi Minh city), within the year 1994, the first direct flight between Kaohsiung and Ho Chi Minh City was established. Through business networks with ethnic Chinese in the area, Taiwanese businessmen then got much of helps to develop their businesses in Vietnam. By that time, Chinese ethnicity (Người Hoa)<sup>7</sup> had migrated to this area for so many years and created their own huge community. They still speak Cantonese and maintain their own rich culture. They soon became the bridge to connect Taiwanese businessmen with locals, not only in business but also in other areas, including marriages.

Through personal tights, the very first cases of international marriage happened between Taiwanese businessmen and Vietnamese women. After that, realizing there is a huge number of Taiwanese men had to face difficulties in finding their domestic partners. Many of previous Taiwanese - Vietnamese married couples decided to introduce Vietnamese women and Taiwanese men for marriages for profits (Vu, M.L; Vu, T.H, 2006). As people in the Southern part of Vietnam has been familiar with marrying foreigners, there were lots of Vietnamese women, especially in the countryside wanted to get married to Taiwanese men and migrated to the country. Thousands of marriages boomed in the late 1990s and the first half of 2000s, most of them are from the Mekong River Delta. One of the reasons back then was because of the poverty (Binh, 2013) (Hong-zen Wang; Shu-ming Chang, 2002).

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<sup>4</sup> The Executive Yuan is the executive branch of the government of the Republic of China on Taiwan.

<sup>5</sup> After expiring in the end of 1996, the Work Plan was renewed for more three years.

<sup>6</sup> Six original member states of ASEAN includes Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. Vietnam joined ASEAN in 1995.

<sup>7</sup> Người Hoa (Hoa people) are a minority group living in Vietnam consisting of persons considered ethnic Chinese, or "Overseas Chinese". They accounted 0.96% of the Vietnamese population by 2009 and mainly concentrate in Ho Chi Minh city, Hanoi (before 1975), Tien Giang, Bien Hoa. During the time that Vietnam was a Chinese colony, there was an attempt by Imperial China to assimilate the Vietnamese. During this time, the Hoa people played an important role in the development of Vietnam.

Renovation in 1986 brought many changes in the Vietnam economic and social picture. The economy had the amazing change and people's lives had been upgraded. However, the Renovation has also created the huge gap between the rich and the poor, the urban and rural areas (Chen, 2006) (Gill, I. and Kharas, H., 2009). Additionally, in the 1990s, television has been become more popular in Vietnamese families (Hong Tien Vu; Tien-Tsung Lee, 2013). In Hanoi, one in ten families had a television in 1988 (Unger, 1991). Ten years later, in 2008, nine in ten families owned one television (Survey of Vietnam Households Living Standard 2008). Back to the time in the 1990s, when only one among 4 or 5 families in each small village had a television, people could gather together and watch news or dramas every evening. The 1990s also witnessed the boom of Hong Kong and Taiwanese dramas in Vietnam market, especially those adapted from the works of famous martial arts novelist Jin Yong (Tingting, 2018). However, after the hit of the movie *Star in my heart*, since 1998, Korean TV dramas accounted up to 40% of the total drama hours in Vietnam (Hyun, 2007).

Through television, people in the poor rural areas acknowledged more about the life outside of their community, especially in foreign countries. They also dreamt about changing their fates and having a better life. To get out of the poverty, they could move to big cities where there were companies, factories; or they could marry to a foreign man and migrate to a foreign country. Many of women back then chose the second way, marriage migration. Since then, marriage migration through brokers has been a hot topic in society, not only with cases of marrying Taiwanese men but also with Korean men later.

### **3.2. International Marriage between Vietnamese women and South Korean men**

International marriage between Vietnamese women and South Korean men had first started as a phenomenon after a while since Vietnam and Korea established the relationship in December 1992; especially it started to grow significantly after Korea applied the Grand Plan to develop the multicultural society, which made the procedures of a transnational marriage becoming easier. According to the statistics of Korean Statistical Information Service, there are 121,994 Vietnamese immigrants living in Korea until 2014 including 55,092 workers, 57,041 marriage women and 4,718 students.

**Table 1: The number of Vietnam – Korea marriage from 2004 to 2014**

Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Tổng
Total	2471	5850	10175	6671	8343	7298	9690	7729	6766	6049	5026	76068
Vietnamese Women	2461	5822	10128	6610	8282	7249	9623	7636	6586	5770	4743	74910
Vietnamese men	10	28	47	61	61	49	67	93	180	279	283	1158

Source: (KOSIS, 2014)

The statistics of the number of Vietnamese women marrying Korean men has also increased rapidly from 2004 to 2014. The table 1 shows the number was only 2,471 in 2004, but ten years later, it has increased twice. Until 2014, there are 76,068 marriages between Vietnam citizen and Korea citizen in total, which also means that there were 7,606 Vietnam – Korea couples registered for marriage every year in the those ten years. The number of marriage also reached the peak in 2006 with 10175 registered marriages.

An interesting point is the number of Vietnamese women - Korean men couples accounted up to 95% of the number of marriage, this absolute portion partly reflects the nature of Vietnam – Korea international marriage as the marriages between Vietnam women and Korean men and mediated of by some actor. However, the change in marriages between Vietnamese men and Korean women is also remarkable as the number of Vietnamese husband increased 28 times in 2014, from 10 Vietnamese men marrying to Korean women in 2004 to 283 people in 2014. The reason of the increasing number of the marriage between Vietnamese men and Korean women can be explained as the Korean women mentioned here are those who hold the Korean nationality but many of them are of Vietnam original.

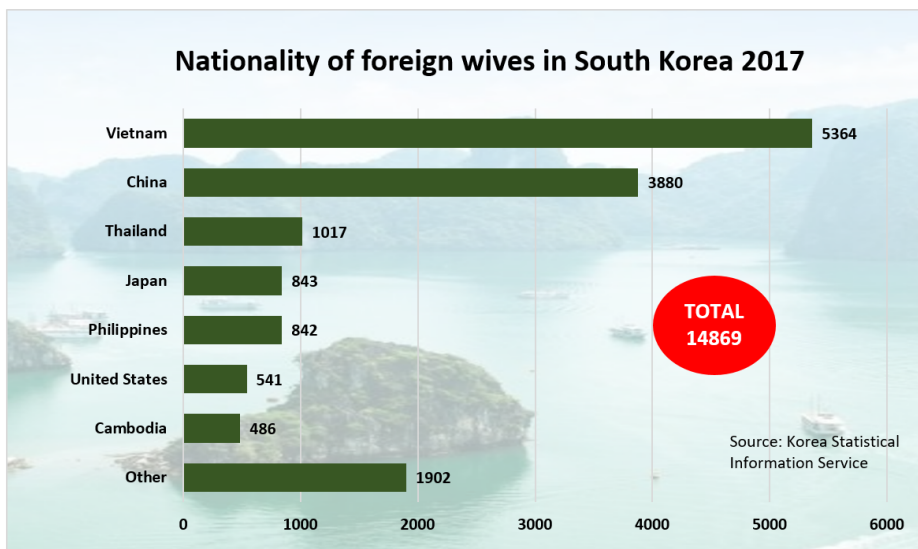
The number of Vietnamese wives divorced Korean husbands has increased from 147 cases (in 2004) to 1821 cases (in 2014); and lots of wives have had Korean nationalities already. After divorcing, they continued to stay in Korea and remarried to Vietnamese men who are workers in Korea<sup>8</sup>.

In South Korea, international marriage marriages have been a decade-hot topic. In many years, Chinese marriage migrant women (including Korean-

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<sup>8</sup> Referred to <http://kosis.kr/index/index.do>

Chinese or Joseonjok<sup>9</sup>) accounted for the largest percentage of foreign wives in South Korea. However, very soon, the number of marriage migrant women from Southeast Asian countries such as Philippines, Vietnam and Cambodia has started significantly. Among them, the number of Vietnamese marriage women in South Korea has been keeping an impressive growth. Since Chinese marriage women always rank the first place, number of Vietnamese marriage migrant women has always stayed at the second place. Within 2014, it was the first time when Vietnamese women outnumbered Chinese women in number. However, since the end of 2017, the number of Vietnamese marriage migrant women have been accounting for the first place, outnumbered the number of Chinese marriage migrant women in South Korea.



**Figure 1. Nationality of foreign wives in South Korea in 2017**

As an KOSIS update in 2017, as for marriages of foreign or naturalized wives by nationality, Vietnam occupied the largest share at 27.9 percent, which was followed by China (26.9%) and the Philippines (4.3%). Compared to 2015, the share of marriages of Vietnamese wives rose by 4.8% while that of marriages of Chinese wives dropped by 1.0%. Since 2017, the number of

<sup>9</sup> Ethnic Koreans whose ancestors migrated to China between the 1850s and the 1950s to avoid Japanese colonization and hunger (Shin, 2017)

Vietnamese marriage migrants in South Korea has always stayed at the first place among foreign wives in South Korea.

Almost twenty years since the very first case of the phenomenon of marrying Korean men, the number of Vietnamese women migrated to South Korea for marriage has been decreased in number, however, in the proportion, they still accounted for the largest number. The decade-old topic – Vietnamese marriage migrant women in South Korea still get lots of attention from public and academia. This time, not only marriage migrant migration motivation by themselves but as well as their family and their children, how do they adapt to the society and how will Korean society be changed in the future with the new multicultural generation. Therefore, even though the topic is decade-old but it still requires more researches and studies in this topic at the moment as well as in the near and far future.

This study thus provides the way to look at the status of international marriage after years implementing and adjusting the immigration laws. Looking back in twenty years with a lot of policies and law on international marriage and immigration have changed, the finding chapters will be aimed to summary actors participating in creating the empire of international marriage between Vietnamese women and Korean men. Three factors of this empire including both Vietnamese and Korean Governments, both marriage brokers in South Korea and Vietnam and marriage migrants will be considered in their interactions and implication. The fifth section will first look at the transnational cooperation in law and policies between two Governments Vietnam and South Korea. At the end, the sixth chapter which is a second finding will look at how brokers and migrants themselves work and make the best use out of the policy cooperation between two countries.

## **Chapter 4. Research methods**

### **4.1. Policy analysis and archival study**

To figure out how Korean and Vietnamese governments' laws on transnational marriages co-work, I collected the policies which have been implementing, followed the flow they have been and changed and reapplied. Laws and policies were reviewed from governmental websites, such as the website of Legal Normative Documents<sup>10</sup> which belongs to the Ministry of Justice of Vietnam as well as laws related to marriage which are published on the website of Korea Embassy in Vietnam<sup>11</sup>.

General data is collected at Korean Statistic Information Service (KOSIS) and for deeper analyses and understandings of migrants' motivation and influences of governmental policies, as well as brokers activities, twenty in-depth interviews were conducted. Interviewees include fifteenth marriage migrants, one marriage broker, one Vietnamese governmental official and three activists. As a Vietnamese living in Korea and having involved in the network of Vietnamese marriage migrant women as a member of a non-governmental organizations working for the Vietnamese migrants' right in Korea since the spring of 2018, I had acquainted myself with the community and its members. It provides me chances to get to the source of my interview pool.

### **4.2. The interviews and the participants**

Interviews was first taken place in South Korea during November - December 2018 and later in Vietnam in January 2019. The details of research sample can be described in Table 2.

In South Korea, most of the interview were conducted in Vietnamese; therefore, my Vietnamese marriage migrant interviewees can think and express their own opinions freely without any difficulties. I decided to divide marriage migrants into three groups: in the 1990s, in the 2005 and 2006, and after 2010. It was because of these three groups would present the historical flow of Vietnamese marriage migrant women in South Korea. 4 marriage migrant

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<sup>10</sup> Website link at [www.vbpl.vn/TW/Pages/vbpqen.aspx](http://www.vbpl.vn/TW/Pages/vbpqen.aspx)

<sup>11</sup> Website link at <http://overseas.mofa.go.kr/vn-ko/index.do>

interviewees came to South Korea in the 1990s represented first cases of Vietnamese women arrived the land of morning calm. Other four came to South Korea between 2005 and 2006; these years witnessed the hugest number of Vietnamese migrant women arriving in South Korea in the history, right after the Korean Government implemented the laws aiming to create the multicultural and multi-ethnic Korean society. The last 4 migrant women are those got married and came to Korea after 2010. They are representatives for the recent migrant generation, which I presumed that their migration motivation and purposes are quite different compared to the previous generations. Dividing interviewee candidates into groups, I am expected to see the difference in the journeys which migrants took part in. Thus, I can tell how policies were implemented and worked on migrants' cases throughout the periods.

**Table 2.** Description of research sample

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Date</b>
1	Migrant in 1990s	Seoul, South Korea	16/12/2018
2	Migrant in 1990s	Seoul, South Korea	10/03/2019
3	Migrant in 1990s	Seoul, South Korea	17/03/2019
4	Migrant in 1990s	Seoul, South Korea	17/03/2019
5	Migrant in 2005 – 2006	Seoul, South Korea	27/11/2018
6	Migrant in 2005 – 2006	Seoul, South Korea	16/12/2018
7	Migrant in 2005 – 2006	Seoul, South Korea	21/04/2019
8	Migrant in 2005 – 2006	Seoul, South Korea	21/04/2019
9	Migrant in 2010s	Seoul, South Korea	20/10/2018
10	Migrant in 2010s	Seoul, South Korea	29/04/2019
11	Migrant in 2010s	Seoul, South Korea	15/05/2019
12	Migrant in 2010s	Seoul, South Korea	19/05/2019
13	Activist	Siheung, South Korea	29/09/2018
14	Broker	Seoul, South Korea	19/05/2019
15	Activist	Hanoi, Vietnam	23/01/2019
16	Activist	Hai Duong, Vietnam	23/01/2019
17	Local government official	Hai Duong, Vietnam	24/01/2019
18	Marriage Candidate	Hai Duong, Vietnam	24/01/2019
19	Marriage Candidate	Hai Duong, Vietnam	24/01/2019
20	Marriage Candidate	Hai Duong, Vietnam	24/01/2019

Besides interviews in Vietnamese, however, there are two in-depth interviews conducted in Korean which are with a broker and a Korean social



activist. Questions in Korean were prepared beforehand and proofread by a Korean scholar; then used to interview and later transcribed into the transcript, which was also proofread by a native speaker in Korean.

During the time I visited Vietnam in January and February of 2019, I visited the Korean language-cultural class for marriage migrants to observe and conduct interviews with marriage candidates and organizers. The class is hosted by the non-government organization called Vietnam-Korea Multicultural Exchange Organization and one of classes in Vietnam appointed by the Ministry of Justice of South Korea and the Korea embassy in Vietnam to teach Korean language and culture for Vietnamese marriage migrant women. The NGO has the main office as well as other Korean cultural classes in Hanoi capital, however the Korean class in Hai Duong is directly appointed by the Korean Embassy in Vietnam for future marriage migrant women.



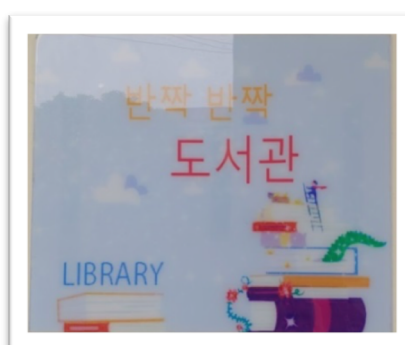
**Figure 2.** Vietnam-Korea Culture Communication Center in Hanoi

After spending time visiting the main office in Hanoi, I went to see the campus of Korean class for marriage migrant women in Hai Duong province. It is located in the campus of the province's women association called 8/3 (International Women' Day - March 3<sup>rd</sup>) Job Center for Women. Hai Duong is one of the most representative places with the largest number of women marrying to Korean men among Northern provinces. The center in Hai Duong province, at that time, was managing around 150 students divided into two classes: A (24<sup>th</sup> class) and B (25<sup>th</sup> class). The 24<sup>th</sup> class – class A with around 70 students was going to graduate by the time I visited the campus. Their office had also finished the recruiting the student for the new class.



**Figure 3.** Closing ceremony of the 24th Korean class in Hai Duong

Most of the student is from other province, not only from Hai Duong, and then they stay in the dormitory which was the building right next to the building of office and classes. They have classes every weekday for two hours. The first class (24<sup>th</sup>) is from 7.30 am to 9.30 am and the second is from 9.30 am to 11.30 am. The campus has 4 Korean language teachers are Vietnamese, one Korean cultural teacher is Korean and the head of the campus is Korean. During the time here, I had an interview with the Korean manager of the campus, as well as visited the student dormitory and interviewed students, who were just married to Korean husbands not a long time ago and were waiting to go to Korea.



**Figure 4.** Korean class campus in Hai Duong province

Back to Hanoi, I had another meeting with a Korea manager from the Korean Association in Hanoi, the organization manages activities and supports Koreans who live and visit Vietnam. Rather than the interview, which gave me information and data about marriage migration, this meeting gave me a new perspective about the studying issue given by a Korean governmental official living in Vietnam.

#### **4.3. Limitations of collected data**

This study is limited in various ways. First, since the Vietnamese brides participated in the interviews are from Seoul, the capital city of South Korea. The interviewees' background could be different from other Vietnamese brides who live in South Korea rural areas in educational level, natal families background, occupation, etc. Thus the sample of this study could be biased.

The second limitation is the inability to arrange interview with South Korean authorities, who represent South Korean Government and its policies. Due to my insufficiency in Korean language and the accessibility to the administrative actors, this restricts me to from understanding South Korea authorities' perspective.

Despite these limitations, data on the actual situation of current and future Vietnamese marriage migrant women, Vietnamese authorities, social activists on multicultural families and marriage migration, brokers, etc. are valuable to interpret the interactions between both governments' policies, brokers and marriage migrants.

## **Chapter 5. The emergence of a regime: A focus on policies**

### **5.1. Vietnamese Government towards international marriage**

As I proposed, ‘marriage migration regime’ is referred to the transnational cooperation between governments, brokers and marriage migrants which created the ‘friendly environment’ for marriage. However, the cooperation which led to the formation of the regime was not the intension of anyone. More specifically, it is not that actors do cooperate but rather they pursue their own interests and, as a result, they cooperate and the regime is formed. This chapter will discover the formation of the marriage migration regime, which was first and foremost created by interacting policies on marriage and immigration from governments of South Korea and Vietnam.

International marriage has a long history in Vietnam. However, a mass international marriage phenomenon, mainly via brokers, has just started since Vietnam implicated the “Doi Moi” (Renovation) policy in 1986. As Taiwan was one of the first investors to come to the country, the wave of marrying foreign husband started with Taiwanese men. Since Vietnam and South Korea established formal diplomatic relations in December 1992, the exchanges between two nations expanded in various fields, including international marriage.

By the end of the 1990s and during the 2000s, the number of Vietnamese women marrying Taiwanese men, later with Korean men was up to thousands of people. Many of them were married through brokers. According to Ministry of Justice of Vietnam (MJOV)<sup>12</sup>, between 1995 and 2010, in the total of 213,770 Vietnamese women got married to foreigners, 90% of them were from rural areas, and 83% married via brokers (Binh, 2013).

However, according to the Decree No. 68/2002/ND-CP on Marriage and Family Law Involving Foreign Elements in Vietnam issued in 2002, any business activities in matchmaking marriages is extremely prohibited. Moreover, any individual or organization reported for introducing, setting up meetings, guiding activities for profit, will have to pay the penalty around

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<sup>12</sup> Ministry of Justice of Vietnam, <https://moj.gov.vn/Pages/home.aspx>

1,000,000 dong (VND) to 2,000,000 (VND) (approximately 40 USD to 80 USD) according the Decree 150/2005-ND-CP issued on 2005. However, the penalty is too small compared to the profit that brokers gain from marriages. In 2000, the price paid by a Taiwanese for a successfully arranged marriage was about NT\$300,000 (about US\$9,100 by at that time) (Hong-zen Wang; Shu-ming Chang, 2002) and for a marriage between Vietnamese woman and a Korean man costs 7,000 – 15,000 USD (Kamiya, H; Lee, C. W., 2009). The cost that a Taiwanese man, or Korean man needed to be pay for a marriage is 180 times bigger than the penalty for the illegal matchmaking activity if caught. The penalty is also extremely small in comparison with the profit that brokers could make from a successful marriage. For example, 1/3 of the cost that a Taiwanese man needs to pay is for the expense in Vietnam, 1/3 is for the Taiwanese broker and other 1/3 is for the Vietnamese broker. In the period from 2000 to 2003, Vietnamese brokers, who were in charge of collecting the source of bride in Vietnam, could make 50 million VND per month (about 2,100 USD) (Cat, 2007). Thus, their salary is 25 times larger than the biggest penalty.

Since issued and implemented in 2005, the law on penalty for illegal marriage brokers seemed to be ineffective. It was shown by the number of marriages between Vietnamese women and Korean men in 2006, which was even double the figure of the year before.

Not only in policy, on Vietnamese marriage migrant brides. The statistics are limited; and if there is collected data, they are mainly small scale statistics such as local commune or local ward. When the bride goes to local authorities to register their marriage, their information is recorded in the local administration's document. Larger scale statistics such as city or province scale, even national scale are rare. There have been only one large-scale national survey project, but carried out at regional scale in six provinces in Mekong River Delta region<sup>13</sup>, from which most Vietnamese brides from. The survey was conducted in 2004 by the Committee of Population, Family and Children, collaborating with Department of Sociology, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, National University in Ho Chi Minh City. There were 1084 structured interviews conducted with 460 young people and 624 households'

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<sup>13</sup> Mekong River Delta locates in the furthest south of Vietnam area. The region, which is vast maze of rivers, swamps and islands, is considered as the biggest rice paddy in Vietnam. The region comprises 12 provinces and the province-level municipality of Can Tho.

members of marriage migrant women; in-depth interviews with 28 local government officials and 82 marriage migrant women who visited their natal families at that time; as well as 23 focused group discussions with young people in these six provinces.

However, the survey result mainly conducted from the marriage migrant women's families instead of them themselves (Binh, 2013). The number of interview with families members was 8 times bigger than the number of marriage migrant women participated in the survey. As the result, the data of this survey mainly focused on analyzing the causes, consequences, problems and especially the impact of Vietnamese marriage women's migration to the natal communities (Binh, 2013). The survey pointed out that the greatest contribution of marriage migrant women is their natal families' economic betterment, which later became the focus of many academic researches. Even though there are no such large-scale or official statistics like the one in 2004, the number of researches and studies on marriage migration between Vietnamese women and Taiwanese/Korean men has boomed in academia in not only those three countries but also worldwide. Numbers of researches and studies have been working on many aspects or perspectives towards the topic and making it became the hot topic during the last decade. Many focuses on migration motivation, some focuses on the change of natal societies or even marriage migrant women's adaptation in the accepting society. However, to archive the statistics in Vietnam is not quite an easy task as the data is collected undistributed. There are 2 ways to collect data. One is to go to the local and do the calculation from the number of marriage which were registered at the local administration. However, the collected data in this case is of local and small-scale. The other way is to collect from the Korea Embassy in Hanoi or Korea Consultant in Ho Chi Minh city based on the number of marriage visa had been issued. For example, according to the statistics of Korea Embassy in Hanoi in 2005, there were 720 marriage visas issued at Hanoi for the whole Northern Vietnam region and; while the number of marriage visa in Ho Chi Minh City were up to 3853, mostly from Mekong River Delta region (Binh, 2013)<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Vietnam has 53 provinces and metropolitan cities which are divided into two regions: the North from Danang and go up North, and the South which includes Danang and go down South. People in the Northern Vietnam apply Korean visa at the Korean Embassy in Hanoi. Meanwhile, people in the South have to go to the Korean Consultant in Ho Chi Minh City to apply for visa. Mekong River Delta Region, where most of marriage

Women married overseas to Taiwanese and Korean men was the big issue in the Mekong River Delta because it led to critical gender imbalance. Many women in marriage age (from 18-30) married to foreign men which created the shortage of bride in many rural communes or villages, especially marriage to someone from the same area and in the close distance is popular in the rural areas in Vietnam. The Vietnamese proverb said that ‘to marry, look at a woman’s lineage, look at a man’s breed’ which can be understood in this case as marrying in the close distance is to better-understanding about the future wife/husband. Because of the gender imbalance, men from these areas, they faced difficulties in finding the partner and had to go further to another communes to find the wife. As result, local governments in this area decided to tighten the document procedure for marriage registration at the local level (Binh, 2013). Soon, since the early to middle of the 2000s, brokers decided to look for the new source of bride from poor rural areas in the North of Vietnam.

The reason for the huge number of women from the Mekong River Delta married overseas can be explained by the following reasons. First, this region is well-known as the most fertile delta in the country. Mekong River Delta is consider as the biggest rice paddy in Vietnam but at the same time, the region experiences natural disasters annually such as flood during the rainy season or droughts during the dry season due to the flow of Mekong river as well as the tropical climate. It is not surprising that many of the poorest communities are located in this area and the levels of education of people are extremely slow compared to the Red River Delta. According to the Living Standard Survey in 2002, 23.4 percent of households in the region is under the poverty and 17.8 percent have no property value to cope with risks (Xuyen, 2004). At the same time, the proportion of women who serve as housewives and are unemployed is the highest (33.6 percent and 30.2 percent) in the country (Nguyen Xoan; Tran Xuyen, 2010).

Natural disasters, population growth, low education level as well as high unemployment rate influence the poverty rate of the region. To escape the poverty, many of them, especially young people, move to other wealthier neighboring regions like Ho Chi Minh City or Southeast region to work at factories. For women, they may choose to take part in international migration

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migrant women is from, locates in the West South part of Vietnam; that is why the consultant in Ho Chi Minh City issued the huge number of visa.

(Nguyen Xoan; Tran Xuyen, 2010). However, economic motivation is not the only reason because compared to other mountainous regions in the country, the Mekong River Delta is not the poorest.

The second reason for the huge number of women from the Mekong River Delta marrying overseas is its multicultural characteristics. In comparison with other delta regions, the multiculturalism of the Mekong River Delta is most visible. Beside the most popular culture throughout the country – Viet culture, this region also consists of flourishing cultures such as Khmer, Chinese and Indian (Nguyen Xoan; Tran Xuyen, 2010). Additionally, because of the influence of the United States in the South of Vietnam during the Vietnam War (1955-1975), people in Mekong River Delta is familiar to adjust to changes and integrate into new environment (Binh, 2013) (Nguyen Xoan; Tran Xuyen, 2010). Along with that, Southern people were becoming more open-minded, westernized and less conservative (Chen, 2006). Consequently, international marriage became popular in the region after the Renovation in 1986.

Third, as the ethnic Chinese concentrates in the South of Vietnam, they were the bridge for the first investors from Taiwan come to the South in particular, Vietnam in general after 1986. There is about 1 million ethnic Chinese have Vietnamese nationality; particularly, 450,000 people are living in Ho Chi Minh City and 400,000 people are living in other southern provinces (Cat, 2007). As result, the number of Taiwanese and Korean investors in industry is concentrated here. Some of ethnic Chinese also became marriage matchmakers between Vietnamese women and Taiwanese men in the beginning (Binh, 2013).

At some level, Vietnamese Government (local and national) paid attentions to the topic of Vietnamese women marrying overseas, even though the Government was not clear. The domination of illegal marriage brokers in Vietnam even though there was a strict forbidden law either prove that not all the policy or policy regulations are guaranteed to be implied in real life or it was the attention of Vietnamese Government viewing international marriages as a livelihood for people in rural areas to escape the poverty. In reality, international marriage did bring back the good change for the natal society. As people in rural areas have less chance to improve their economic situation, especially women, international marriage then was a good way for them to help themselves and the family.



In the case of Korean Government, the Government's reaction was opposite to the Vietnamese's as being more active in issuing laws and policies related to international marriage and immigration. The next section will discuss about these policies.

## **5.2. The shortage of brides in South Korea and the hit of the government's 2006 Grand Plan**

The first flow of foreign bride was back to the time before 1990 with Japanese brides married through Unification Church. In 1988, 2500 Korean members and Japanese members of the church were matched for a Blessing ceremony held in Korea by the Reverend Moon, the founder of the Unification Church (Mee, 2006).

In 1992, after China and South Korea formally established the diplomatic relation on August 24, many Korean-Chinese brides came to Korea (Lee H.-K. , 2008) (Yang, 2011) (Freeman, 2005). The inflow of Korean-Chinese brides was actually forced by the Government's policy in 1992 as Korean Government opened the door for cross-border brides instead (Lee H.-K. , 2008). After the massive out-migration of labor during the 1950s to 1970s, the Government implemented the policies to attract more foreign workers from Thailand, Vietnam, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Philippines but not China to face with "*Koreans are reluctant to work in the sweatshop sector, known as the three-D sector-dirty, dangerous and difficult*" (Lim, 2003). Thus, there was the huge number of Chinese including Korea-Chinese married to Korean men instead of migrating as a worker migrant. However, until the mid-1990s, Korean Government decided to restrict the flow of Chinese brides due to many disguised marriages (Binh, 2013). Many more complicated procedures were required such as marriage confirmation in China, marriage registration in China, marriage registration in Korea, visa application for Chinese spouse, etc. (Lee H.-K. , 2008). Notwithstanding the restriction, there was still the huge number of Chinese women marrying to Korean men. Later, the complicated marriage processes between Chinese women and Korean men were simplified again from 1 July 2003 (Lee H.-K. , 2008).

At the same time, in August 1999, marriage agencies did not have to get licenses from local governments and they could active as free businesses. This led to an increase of marriage matchmaker as well as the increasing

number of international marriage between Korean men and women from Thailand, Vietnam, Mongolia and Russia (Lee H.-K. , 2008). Witnessing the huge number of foreign spouse in Korea, the Government started to provide assistance for multicultural families started with revising the Nationality Law in 1997. Until 1998, before the revised Nationality Law was enacted, the old law was patrilineal and gender-biased (Lee H.-K. , 2008). According to that, the nationality of the child has to follow their father only; at the same time, if foreign wives of Korean men could obtain Korean nationality immediately, foreign husbands who married to Korean women needed to wait for two years and were required to meet certain eligibility. After 1998, the other issue on visa of foreign spouse was also solved by May 2002, all foreign spouses could get residence (F-2) visas, which allowed them to work before they get the Korean citizenship (Lee H.-K. , 2008).

One of the reason that South Korean Government boosted international marriage between Korean men and foreign women was because of the lack of bride in South Korea. As the result of the Korea War 1950-1953, Korea experienced a baby boom between 1954 and 1960 as an annual rate of natural population growth of 3%, the highest in the history of Korea. In a reaction towards the high population pressure in the situation of the poor economy after the war, the Korean Government became more involved in family planning. In 1962, the Government implemented National Family Planning policies to reduce the birthrate. It then resulted as the two-child target was met in the 1970s and the one child target in the 1980s (Binh, 2013).

As the society is strongly influenced by Confucianism resulted in the strong preference for son in the family, the gender imbalance started to happen. The sex ratio became more towards male. From the sex ratio of 106 in the period of 1970 to 1980, it jumped to 116 in 1990 ( Minja Kim Choe; Kyung Ae Park, 2005). It led to a bride shortage phenomenon for Korean male born the 1970s and 1980s when they reached to marriage age. The huge number of male among millions Korean male born between those periods faced hardness in finding partner, especially men in the countryside. It is because of the shortage of brides in rural areas is also effected by sex-selective migration. More Korean women decided to move to the city because of job distribution as well as they want to focus more on their study, career and improve their lives. This massive migration led to gender imbalance in rural areas. At the same time, they invest

more on building for themselves, they also become more careful in choosing partner, which leads to less chances for marriage for male of low socio-economic class in rural areas. As result, Korean male in rural areas are forced to find foreign wives. The statistics shows that recently there is always one Vietnamese – Korean couple in every sic married couples in agricultural region (Hwan, 2009).

According to (Jones, 2007), the proportion of Korean women single at the ages 30-34 and 40-44 in 1970 and 2000 both increased. From 1.4% women single at ages 30-34 in 1970 to 10.7% in 2000 and from 0.2% women single at ages 40-44 in 1970 to 2.6% in 2000. A gender imbalance since the 1980s warned a bride shortage for 1.2 million Korean male in 2012 (Binh, 2013).

Additionally, as more Korean women join in the labor force and become more economically independent, they consider marriage as an optional choice. According to the statistics on Age Specific Marriage Rates od Bride and Bridegroom in Korea in 1990, 2000 and 2018, if in 1990 92.1% married at the age of 20-24 years old, in 2018 it was only 11.5%. More women married at the later age at 25-29 years old or 30-34 years old, however, the marriage rate was still lower than in the past as only 57% women in the age 25-29 years old and 49.2% women in the age 30-34 years old married.

After all, the huge number of multicultural families arose during the early 2000s, mainly multicultural families of Korean husband and foreign wives. Until 2005, the Government's attention started by conducting two national-scale surveys including the Welfare State of International Marriage Family (2005) and Survey on the Conjugal Life of Transnational Marriage Family (2006). Finally, on 26 April 2006, after getting results from the two surveys, the Korean Government officially announced the "Grand Plan" which is aimed to support foreign wives and their families integrate to the society (Lee H.-K. , 2008).

**Table 3.** Age Specific Marriage Rates of Bride and Groom in South Korea

Year	2018		2000		1990	
	Husband (per 1000 population)	Wife (per 1000 population)	Husband (per 1000 population)	Wife (per 1000 population)	Husband (per 1000 population)	Wife (per 1000 population)
20 – 24 years old	3.7	<b>11.5</b>	12.3	<b>44.8</b>	26.3	<b>92.1</b>
25 – 29 years old	31.3	<b>57.0</b>	70.7	<b>74.9</b>	106.1	<b>70.9</b>
30 – 34 years old	55.9	<b>49.2</b>	39.0	<b>17.4</b>	34.8	<b>11.7</b>
35 – 39 years old	23.8	16.0	11.2	7.8	8.4	4.9

Source: Kosis<sup>15</sup>

Leading by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, other ministries including the Ministry of Justice, Labor, Social Welfare and Health, Education and Human Resources Development, as well as local and central governments had to participate in the Plan (Lee H.-K. , 2008).

The vision of the “Grand Plan” is “a social integration of foreign wives and an attainment of a multicultural society”. The major policies are sevenfold:

- (1) regulation of international marriage agencies and protection of foreign wives before entry into Korea;
- (2) support for victims of domestic violence;
- (3) support and orientation for newly arrived foreign wives, such as offering Korean language and culture classes;
- (4) support for children of international marriages in schools;
- (5) providing social welfare to foreign wives;
- (6) raising social awareness of multicultural issues;
- (7) making a comprehensive support system to attain the goals

Among seven proposed innovations, the fourth and sixth policy were directed at Korean people and their attitude towards multicultural families and their children. According to the fourth policy, the school textbooks were planned to revise in order to prevent racial discrimination. As well as the term

<sup>15</sup> Referred to <http://kosis.kr/index/index.do> accessed on April 8, 2019

“multicultural family” was officially used to replace the word “mixed-blood” or “biracial” which implies racial discrimination.

The Grand Plan seemed like to have immediate effect as the number of Vietnamese marriage women increased two hundred percent in 2006 in comparison to the number in 2005. Noteworthy, the timing was also the important key here because the policy came out right at the time the Taiwanese Government decided to restrict the number of marriage between Taiwanese men and Vietnamese women in 2004 after so many cases of Vietnamese women dehumanized in families reported. The restriction law in Taiwan was to prevent human-trafficking and domestic violence but at the same time, naturally drive the flow of marriage migrant women to Korea.

After 2006, in 2008, the Ministry of Government Legislation implemented the “Support for Multicultural Families Act” in order to improve the quality of life of multicultural family members and the unity of society by helping multicultural family members enjoy stable family living<sup>16</sup>.

In 2008, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family was leading in establishing the system of Multicultural Families Support Center (MFSC). Multicultural Family Support Centers are aimed to provide group education (on family, gender equality, human rights, etc.), Korean language education, visiting education, counseling services, information services and translation and interpretation services for married immigrants, in addition to services to support the language skills development of the children of married immigrants, in order to promote better family relations in multicultural families and help multicultural families adapt to Korean society. After ten years, the numbers of Multicultural Family Support Center in Korea increased from 21 centers in 2008 to 217 centers in 2017<sup>17</sup>.

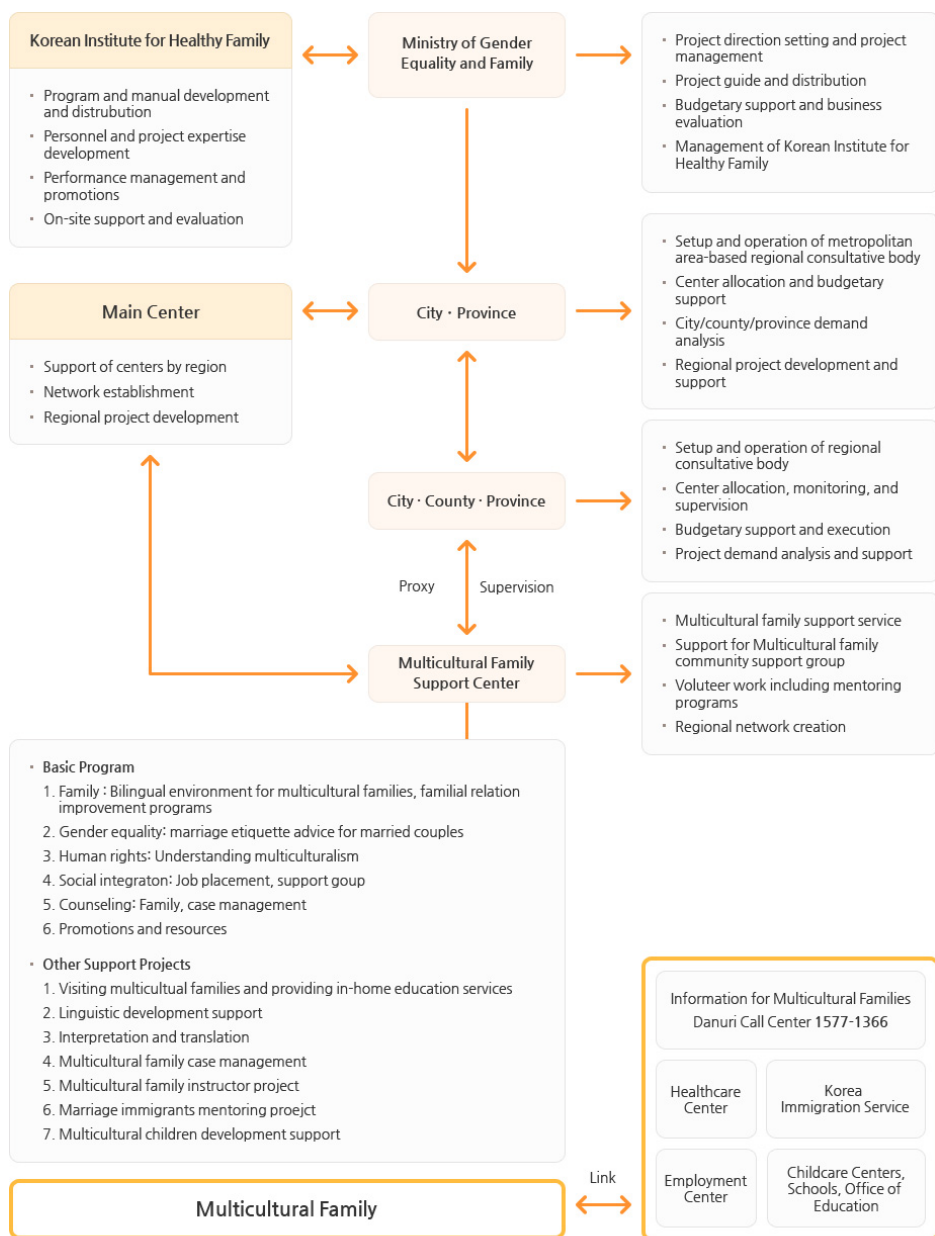
The Grand Plan was successful in changing an idea of a mono-ethnic Korean society to the notion of “multicultural” Korea and welcoming foreigners into Korean society (Lee H.-K. , 2008). As results, marriage

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<sup>16</sup> Accessed from the website of the Ministry of Government Legislation at <http://moleg.go.kr/english/korLawEng?pstSeq=58481> on April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019

<sup>17</sup> Accessed from the website of MFSC on April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019  
<https://www.liveinkorea.kr/portal/USA/page/contents.do?menuSeq=3794&pageSeq=119>

procedure with foreign spouse became much easier as well as marriage migrants got much assistance since they are still in their natal country. However, the Plan is seemed to “lead to the assimilation of foreigners rather than their integration into society” (Lee H.-K. , 2008).



**Figure 5. Promotional System of Supporting Projects (MFSC) <sup>18</sup>**

<sup>18</sup> Accessed from the website of MFSC on April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019  
<https://www.liveinkorea.kr/portal/USA/page/contents.do?menuSeq=3794&pageSeq=119>

### **5.3. Free South Korean Broker Business and Illegal Vietnamese Brokers' activities**

This section figures out how transnational brokers first teamed, developed and mediated the marriages, even though brokers has been illegal in Vietnam. The brokers activities are under control of the Governments, for example in the case in Korea, in August 1999, marriage agencies did not have to get licenses from local governments and they could be active as free businesses (Lee Hye-Kyung, 2008). It led to the significant increase of marriage matchmaker in South Korea and the boom of international marriage between South Korean men and foreign women.

Due to the shortage of bride in South Korea, especially in rural areas, international marriage was encouraged. Since most of the case of South Korean men who is looking for a foreign wife from abroad is from rural areas, one of the easiest way for those who do not travel abroad or work in international environment to get married is through broker business. One of the way the South Korean Government could support international marriage is they free brokers' activities. Since broker company did not need to get a license and active as a free business, the number of people involved in this business increased rapidly, especially since the business itself brings back the huge profit. In 2000, the price for a marriage between Vietnamese woman and a Korean man cost 7,000 – 15,000 USD (Kamiya, H; Lee, C. W., 2009) and 1/3 of that cost went to the South Korean broker's pocket. The huge demand from the society as well as the massive profit that mediating international marriage could bring back led to the huge increasing number of marriage matchmakers in many years, along with the huge number of international marriage through brokers.

In additional, in South Korea, marriage matchmaker, known as marriage informative company, are businesses working to match men and women for a marriage. Marriage matchmaker in South Korea in general is quite popular and wide-spread known among young generation as they are getting married really late recently. Self-investment, post-industrialization and competitive job positions in South Korea make young people have no choice but rather focusing on their career; they later postpone the marriage. South Korea is also well known for its passed-time working hours as people have to stay at the company after official working hours until night. The culture



heightened influenced by Confucianism also make workers cannot leave the office before their bosses leave, even though this is changing. Thus, young people either are too tired and pressure-able to date or have no chances for dating and marriage. This kind of business, marriage matchmaker, then has their businesses running effectively. For a long time, the Government has been also legalized these activities in order to force the marriage rate and fertility rate.

In contrast, in Vietnam, even though matchmaking activities are illegal, brokers still can find the way to manage their job and the procedure, in many cases, was often made under the table payments (Belanger et al. 2011). Illegal brokers dominated the international marriage market in Vietnam. According to Ministry of Justice of Vietnam (MJOV)<sup>19</sup>, between 1995 and 2010, in the total of 213,770 Vietnamese women got married to foreigners, 90% of them were from rural areas, and 83% married via brokers (Binh, 2013).

It is noteworthy that brokers in Vietnam are not agencies or companies as all the marriage matchmaking business is illegal. Vietnamese brokers could be anyone. They could be workers who had worded in South Korea before, knew Korean language and are hired by Korean brokers to manage meetings in Vietnam. In many cases there were women who knew a little Korean but have a broad networks and knew well about the area as well as girls in marriage age in those areas. Marriage migrant women who had married to South Korean men before could do the marriage matchmaking jobs too. However, their networks are circled their relatives and friends, non-profit and un-occasionally. Their informality and singleness could be one of the reason helped this business out of the legal screening.

Despite the illegality, brokers in Vietnam only faced difficulties from local governments once in a blue moon. As the wave of marrying foreign men first started from Mekong River Delta, many of brokers were either from this area or came to this area to run their businesses. Soon, it became an huge issue in the Mekong River Delta because it led to critical gender imbalance during the first half of the 2000s. As result, local governments in this area decided to tighten the document procedure for marriage registration at the local level.

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<sup>19</sup> Ministry of Justice of Vietnam, <https://moj.gov.vn/Pages/home.aspx>

Many brokers moved North to the poor rural areas to find new bride sources (Binh, 2013).

Even though brokers were totally illegal in Vietnam, they dominate the international marriage market. For example, the case of a interviewee who got married to her Korean husband in 2004. There was no requirements for Vietnamese brides in terms of language of Korean cultural understanding back to the old time, the interviewee managed to complete the documental process by herself. Four months had passed but she still could not finished the work. In the end, she decided to ask for a broker's help and things turned better.

*It was hard at first as I had to do everything by myself while other women got married through brokers and the broker took care of everything. [...] I decided to ask for help from a broker and everything was much better.* – Interviewee 4

Brokers dominate the international marriage market could also be viewed through the way the found brides. One of the interviewees told me that in the past, the broker usually went to the families who had daughters in the age of marriage and asked them to go to the meetings. They managed the whole plan, even brought the family gifts and money beforehand to encourage the daughter to go meet the foreign men. This showed that brokers did target on the poverty of many poor families in rural areas by showing them the material thing to encourage the daughter or encourage their parents to send their children to international marriages which promised many brighten future for the family.

In many cases, the women, the daughter of these families were actually forced into international marriages instead of choosing it as their choice. Next part will look at the cases of marriage migrants in the past as well as their independency in making the choice.

#### **5.4. Passive Marriage Migrants and Economic Motivation**

In the past, due to the family's difficult economic condition, many of Vietnamese women married to Korean men to help their families. Before the wave of marrying Korean men started, there was the trend of marrying Taiwanese started from the Mekong River Delta. One of the reasons back then was because Mekong River Delta is one of the poorest regions in Vietnam. It was the same to the wave of marrying Korean men later.

*My sister married fourteenth, fifteenth years ago; it was because of the economic situation of our family. Later with me, it was just I turned to 27 but was not married by that time and my sister found someone she thought that he will be nice to me – Interviewee 3*

In this case, even though the interviewee stated that she got married to her Korean husband in 2012 not because of the family economy situation but her sister who got married fourteen years ago to a Korean man, was motivated by the economic reason. However, this is not the only case but rather more than common back to the old time.

*I was working in the factory in the South [of Vietnam] but my family had a big debt and my salary could not help that much. My friend recommended to me to marry to a Korean man and come to Korea to work. I myself did think about the fake marriage at first – Interviewee 4*

Even though later the interviewee 4 came to South Korea and got married to her true Korean husband instead of a fake marriage, the quote showed that there were many cases of Vietnamese women choosing international marriage as a choice of livelihood and to help their own family. This argument was also mentioned in (Stephen Castles; Mark J. Miller, 2009) as migration decisions are made by elders (especially men) and women are expected to obey patriarchy authority, which is even supported by they are more reliable in sending remittances. Especially in the rural areas, since the labor of the young men is less dispensable on the farm, the women are usually sent to the city or overseas.

As the society is strongly influenced by Confucianism, the daughters or the sons in the Viet family were raised up with a thinking of taking care of their parents when they get older. At the same time, in the Viet family, as the father is the main bread-winner, the main decision in the family mainly came from the father. Many of Vietnamese women who chose to get married to Taiwanese men or South Korean men were influenced by that Confucianism ideology. They feel a duty of taking care of their aged parents and paying for all the debts in the family. As if the job in Vietnam could not guarantee, marrying to a foreign man is considered as a way to bring a better economy, even the wealthy for the family. In other cases, women are forced into marriages

as their parents wished it. Many of them did feel not wanted to go abroad, but they did not have the other choices.

Even though media and news spread the news about Vietnamese women facing domestic abuse in South Korea, there were many cases of women who got married to Taiwanese or South Korean men had a happy marriage. They sent money back to the family to pay debts, to support other family members' education or business, or build the house, etc. When the Vietnamese marriage migrant women came home to visit, many of them looked successful and wealthy, which could make others feel admiring. In the small community such as a commune or a village, the wealthier of families whose daughter went abroad also affected other families which their daughters were not married to a foreign man. These are called as 'social remittances', which was mentioned by (Levitt, 1998). According to that, social remittances are transferred when migrants return on temporary visits or permanently, through visits by non-migrants to relatives abroad, and through phone calls, letters and videos. These days, one of the most supporting tool can be social media as Facebook platform is quite popular in Vietnam. Obviously there are bad sides of international marriage in the foreign country, however, only positive values are sent back home. That explains that despite the bad news on media, young women still choose international marriage for themselves.

A woman from one of the most representative commune for women marrying foreign men in the Northern Vietnam told me the story of her daughter. Looking at other families whose daughter got married to Taiwanese men or Korean men, sent remittance back to their families, she had a plan for her daughter to get marriage to a Korean man too. She tried to convince her daughter to go to the meeting, even though things did not work out in that way.

*[...] I even set some meetings up for my daughter to meet Korean men, however she refused it. She cried and begged me to not send her to the meetings. [...] There was no other choice as my daughter herself did not want to get married to any foreign man and I could not force her to do that. – Interviewee 17*

Even though the marriage setup was not successful, the idea of which this interviewee had was not the only case in the commune, or in other rural areas. On one hand, they did wish a better life for their daughter, but at the same

time, they might think about international marriage as a livelihood for a family. As a daughter, these women feel the duty as well as the pressure in their families, they then intentionally chose international marriage or listen to their parent's voice.

There were many case of young women forced into international marriages as their parents' wishes. They could not refuse it. They chose to marry to the men because of either listening up to their parents or encouraged to do it. The case of the daughter of the interviewee from the above interviewee was actually rare in the past.

*To be honest, even though there are a lot of cases showed on television and newspaper about Vietnamese women treated bad or violated in South Korea. However, you may experience the same thing if you marry to a Vietnamese man though. So with the same hypothesis that you are treated bad, marrying a Korean man still guarantees that you will be well-off and have money – Interviewee 17*

The quote showed the sad fact that despite the difference in language, culture in many multicultural families which could lead to domestic violence, many women chose international marriage as a livelihood for them and their families to escape the poverty. Passive decision-making and economical motivation contributed the reason for many women in the past participating in international marriage.

However, as time passed by, there are more chances for young women to choose whether they participate into international marriage or not. The independency of women in making marriage decision at lately time will be included in the next chapter.

## **5.5. Discussion**

During the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, the international marriage between Vietnamese women and South Korean men has started and developed significantly. Even though marriage seems to be a very individual decision, in this case of transnational marriage between these two countries' citizens, it seems to be not only of one actor. The trend of marrying foreign men – Taiwanese and South Koreans in Vietnam, as well as the rapid increase

of foreign wives – include the huge number of Vietnamese in South Korea was the complex combination between the states' roles, brokers' activities and of course, those who directly participate in the migration – marriage migrants. Noteworthy, notwithstanding each actor only plays their role in their own ground and for their interests, it created a combination between them which has helped the development of international marriage between Vietnamese women and South Korean men. This combination did have its own power, even though it was informal and unintentionally. As result, it formed what is called the marriage migration regime of Vietnamese women in South Korea.

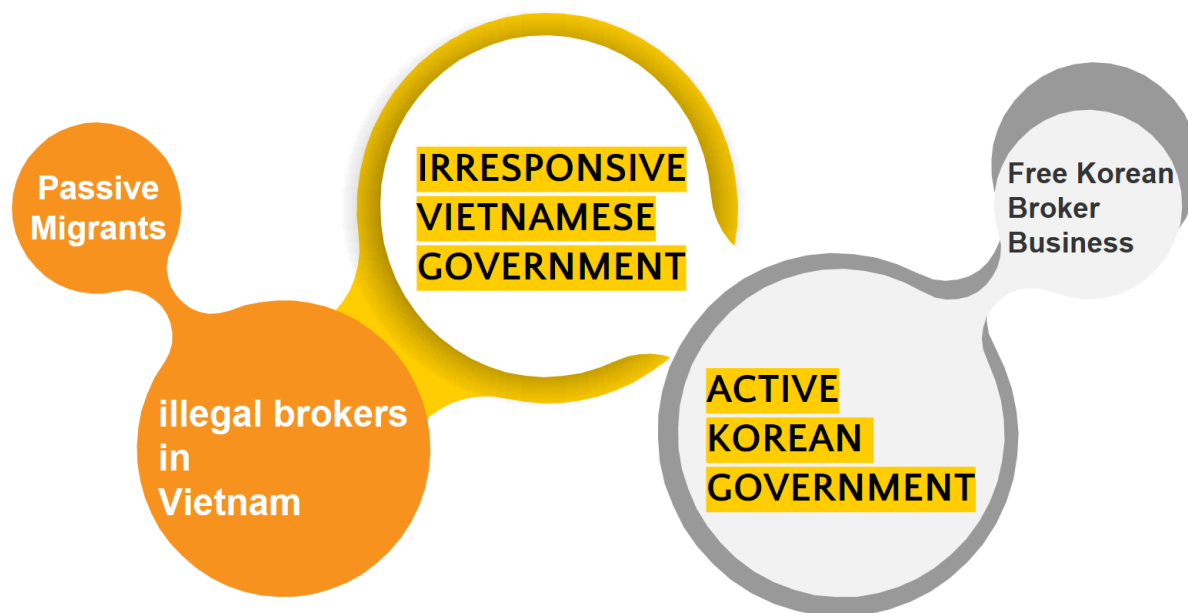
During the time international marriage had started in the end of the 1990s until the middle of the 2000s, the South Korean Government had always paid attention and actively issued policies related to international marriage. Along with the long history of foreign women marrying South Korean men in general and Vietnamese marriage migrant women in particularly, the Korean Government has been always actively issuing policies on supporting marriage migrant women or adjust the law to control the number of comings. The Grand Plan implemented was the huge upgrade of Korean Government in facing the phenomenon of international marriage and multicultural families. Their attention was to encourage international marriage, including freeing marriage brokers' businesses in order to dealing with the shortage of brides in the country. In the case of Vietnam, the Government's response was not extremely clear about international marriage. Despite the law stated that marriage brokers was extremely prohibited in Vietnam, the penalty for illegal matchmaking activities was small though, the fact was that illegal brokers did active, dominated the international marriage market and took advantages on poor young women from rural areas. The domination of illegal marriage brokers in Vietnam despite the law could say that either it proved the failure of policy regulations in real life or it actually meant the attention of the Vietnamese Government to let marriage brokers do their jobs, international marriage blossom. The Vietnamese Government might view and secretly encourage international marriage as one of the livelihoods for people in rural areas to escape the poverty. On the other hand, the failure of policy-makers in Vietnam is at the root of many political and social problems. This could be, as (Stephen Castles; Mark J. Miller, 2009) stated, a one-sided focus on economic models of migration, which claim that migration is an individual response to market factors.

Whatever it was, this irresponsible Vietnamese Government towards international marriage in the beginning had helped to create the environment for marriage brokers blossoming in Vietnam, as well as allowing Vietnamese women participating in international marriage. At the same time, the South Korean Government and Korean brokers played their roles as pull actors to encourage marriage migrant women to come to the country. Even though it was informal and non-intensive, it resulted the cooperation between two Governments, brokers and marriage migrants in international marriage between Vietnamese women and South Korean men. The marriage migration regime of Vietnamese women in South Korea was then formed through this whole informal cooperation.

The figure 6 in the end of this chapter will illustrate the formation of the marriage migration regime of Vietnamese women in South Korea. The transnational cooperation is consequential of individual influence of active Korean Government, irresponsible Vietnamese Government, the flourishing of legal brokers in South Korea and illegal brokers in Vietnam, and passive Vietnamese marriage migrant women. .

Finally, it is not risky to state that towards the topic of Vietnamese – Korean marriage, or Vietnamese marriage migrant women in South Korea, Vietnam and South Korea seem to be in two opposite sides of action but the same intension in mind. As time passed by, the way in approaching the international marriage topic of two Governments has changed, paralleled/influenced with/on the changes of other actors involved in the regime. The marriage migration regime of Vietnamese women in South Korea then developed into the new stage, which will be examined in the next chapter.

## The Emergence of A Regime: An Informal Cooperation



**Figure 6.** The emergence of a regime: An informal cooperation



## **Chapter 6. The development of the regime: the becoming-formalized regime**

### **6.1. Vietnamese Government started to legalize brokers' activities**

During the second half of the 1990s and 2005, thousands of Vietnamese women have got married to Taiwanese/South Korean men. However, the Vietnamese Government had only issued two policies related to the topic. As the Decree No. 68 in 2002 stated any business activities in matchmaking marriages is extremely prohibited and the Decree 150 in 2005 stated the penalty for illegal matchmaking from 1,000,000 dong (VND) to 2,000,000 (VND) (approximately 40 USD to 80 USD), the law seemed to not be that much effective in real life. Illegal marriage brokers dominated the international marriage market between Vietnamese women and South Korean men, many marriage migrant women were successfully in finding their happy home in South Korea but at the same time, many of them were taken advantage.

The penalty which was issued in the 2005 was indeed smaller than the profit could make from a successful marriage. That explained why even though the law stated marriage matchmaking activities were extremely prohibited, these activities still blossomed. Only until 4 years later, in 2009, the Vietnamese Government strengthened the penalty for illegal marriage matchmaking activities called 60/2009/ND-CP, which stated that any earning-profit activities on matchmaking international marriage will be penalized from 10,000,000 dong (VND) to 2,000,000 dong (VND), about 400 USD to 800 USD. This time, the fine was 10 times bigger than 4 years before. The law started to be implied since the 23th of July, 2009. In additionally, there is no law regarding to foreign marriage brokers' activities in Vietnam.

However, the law on prohibiting marriage brokers seem to be ineffective in the situation in Vietnam. It was because of the huge demand and supply for international marriage and it was based mainly on brokers. Back to the time of the 2000s, the mobile phone was not popular in Vietnam, extremely in the rural areas. Social media was still taking its first steps to enter the market. People then had less opportunities to get to know people, especially from other countries. Brokers then played a crucial role for that, to connect and mediate

people and marriage. That is the reason for the boom of marriages with Korean men via brokers even though matchmaking activity is illegal in Vietnam.

However, there is also an objective reason made the brokers' activities out of control of the central and local governments. Couples registering at the local government or embassy have been taught about how to deal with the paper work as well as the interview. At the local government, the authorities probably know what is happening in their area, some regions are famous for hosting meeting events such as Kien Thuy, Thuy Nguyen (Hai Phong), etc. However, as the commune is quite small and people are neighborhoods, the authorities and brides might already know each other. At the same time, as the migration was often made under the table payments, the document process is then not too hard to affordable at the local desk (Daniele Belanger; Tran Giang Linh, 2011). At the embassy, brides were also "trained" to reply to questions correctly by the instruction of agents before the interview (Hong-zen Wang; Shu-ming Chang, 2002). Most of the case, brides declare that they knew their husband via a friend and a relative, or even through the Internet. However, even though through a friend or relative, the category of "relatives and friends" must be carefully interpreted because those "friends and relatives" may be employing at migratory agencies (Hong-zen Wang; Shu-ming Chang, 2002). In some cases, marriage migrant women who already married overseas work as profit-marriage brokers too. It leads to the confusion as where is the line between getting introduced through relatives or friends legally (which is non-profitable) and illegally (which is profitable) as the law officially implemented in 2013 stated that there is not prohibition about couples that are introduced through relatives or friends.

As time passes by, the Vietnamese Government paid more attention to international marriage and tried another way of approaching the topic of brokers. According to the Law on Marriage and Family Involving Foreign Elements at 24/2013/ND-CP, 2013.03.28, the women's support center which belongs to local women's association are able to introduce couples for international marriage. The decree 33/1/g stated that "if a Vietnamese citizen or a foreigner want to marry to a foreigner or a Vietnamese citizen, the women's support center is allowed to do matchmaking activities". Not only matchmaking jobs, the women's support center also does counseling activities for couples and marriage migrant women. To be activated, they need to register at the

department of Justice at the local province/city. Accept these designated women's support centers, other organizations, centers or individuals, either of profit or non-profit are not allowed to do marriage matchmaking jobs.

In the past decade and a half, as international marriage has become the hot topic and receive lots of attention from the academia, media and society, the Vietnamese Government also expressed its change in approaching the topic. As result, the Law on Marriage and Family Involving Foreign Elements has adjusted toward the more opened way. Acknowledging that notwithstanding marriage matchmaking activities were extremely banned in Vietnam, brokers is still dominant the international marriage market, the Government finally gave a hand in time, even though it was a very early step to come to legalize matchmaking activities. However, it promises for a guarantee for the right of marriage migrant women in a long term. It is much better than brides themselves participated in secret or illegal matchmaking activities, then their right is hardly protected. As the Government allows the women's support center for marriage matchmaking activities, it marked the huge but careful step of Vietnamese Government in paying more attention for the emergency of the problem as well as in protecting women's right.

However, it is not deniable that in the past, even though the law on prohibiting matchmaking activities in Vietnam was issued, the activities of brokers was still dominant. Thus, the lesson then was the more important thing is the law enforcement in the reality. Issuing the appropriate law, which is made based on the current status of the society as well as enable the thorough protection for the right of citizens, is important, but its implication in real life is crucial to consider about.

## **6.2. South Korea adjusted regulations**

Thousands of marriage migrant women from China, Vietnam, Philippines, Cambodia, etc. had arrived in South Korea until 2005. However, along with that was also the huge number of women reported to facing domestic violence, even being murdered or escaping from their families. Many problems have been raising in multicultural families which was explained as mainly causing from the lack of communication and easy immigration law.

In the case of Vietnamese marriage migrant women, from April 2007 until 2019, there were eleven traumatic reports on Vietnamese wives who committed suicide or were murdered by the husband or the family in law. The first case was back to April 2007 when L.T.K.D died in Daegu after only one month arriving at Korea. She had been beaten by her husband several times. She tried to escape by using the curtain to jump down from 9<sup>th</sup> floor. She lost her life. Two months later, H.M bride was killed by her husband after seven days in Korea. Her husband has mental illness <sup>20</sup>. In February 2008, T.T.T.L, a bride from Can Tho, was committed suicide herself after less than one month in Korea due to language barrier and cultural differences, which generated conflicts in her family<sup>21</sup>. In July 2010, T.T.H.N was stabbed to death by her husband after one week in Korea <sup>22</sup>.

Violence in multicultural families was reported as causing from misunderstanding in communicate, especially in the early period of marriage. When words cannot help two express their own ideas and opinion, the bump did. As Korean husband do not usually speak any Vietnamese, the effort to keep harmony in the family is of women. They learn Korean language, Korean cultural and how to make Korean food. The class on Korean language and Korean culture were given free at MFSC which are distributed densely around the country. However, misunderstandings are still happening as many marriage migrants are not able to actually speak the language, especially during the first few months or even few years of marriage.

At the same time, many cases of marriage migrant women, newly brides, escaped from the marriage and their husbands. Some even escaped from the airport right after it landed in Incheon or Busan International Airport, despite their husband come to the airport to pick them up. Some waited until they get Alien Registration Card (ARC) and escaped from their houses. The

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<sup>20</sup> Nguyen Phuong (2007) *H.M bride die in Korea: Break one dream*. Retrieved April 2019 from Tuoi Tre newspaper at <http://tuoitre.vn/tin/chinh-tri-xa-hoi/phong-su-ky-su/20070814/vu-co-dau-hoang-mai-bi-sat-hai-tai-han-quoc-do-vo-mot-giac-mo/215215/html>

<sup>21</sup> CA (2008). *One more Vietnamese brides die in Korea*. Retrieved 4 10, 2016, from Vnexpress at <http://vnexpress.net/tin-tuc/the-gioi/nguoi-viet-5-chau/mot-co-dau-viet-nhay-lau-tu-tu-o-han-quoc-2107537.html>

<sup>22</sup> Tien Thuy, Viet Linh (2010). *Vietnamese brides were killed in Korea*. Retrieved 4 10, 2016, from Vnexpress at <http://vnexpress.net/tin-tuc/thoi-su/bi-kich-co-dau-viet-bi-chong-sat-hai-o-han-quoc-2169118.html>

reasons for escaping are also diverse. Many of them actually wanted to come to Korea to work illegally and send remittance back to their families, however, getting a work visa to South Korea is extremely hard to Vietnamese, especially recently Korean Government restricted issuing visa for blue-collar workers as many of them stay illegally in Korea after legal duration. So, because of the poverty and making money is harder and harder in Vietnam, many women think about go to Korea and work to make this amount of money as their capital to later doing a business or simply guarantee their lives in Vietnam. Making money in Korea of course is not an easy task. However, most of Vietnamese workers working here in the field of 3D jobs, which not many Koreans choose to work. Compare to the salary in Vietnam, they make better money, especially the rate exchange is different between two countries' currency. If a worker lives really simply and do save money, they can make quite a lot.

Like the story of the interviewee 4 mentioned earlier, she was recommended by a friend to *“marry to a Korean men and come to Korea to work”* which literary meant a fake marriage, choosing a fake marriage to come to South Korea to work, earn money and help the family was not the rare thing to see in the past.

Reacting towards these negative situations, the South Korean Government has issued policies to control and tighten the procedure of applying for spouse visa in Vietnam. Since April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014, a new law was set in which the women, who wish to marry Korean man, have to pass the required exams, no matter whether the couple already hold a ceremony and marriage documents or not. According to the official announcement of Department of Justice<sup>23</sup>, since 27<sup>th</sup> December 2016, marriage migrant to want to apply for the spouse visa have to meet either one of these conditions:

- (1) Passing the TOPIK I (Beginning Level of Test of Proficiency in Korean) of National Institute for International Education of Ministry of Education.
- (2) Completing the Beginning level in Korean Education at institutes which are assigned by Ministry of Justice.

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<sup>23</sup> Ministry of Justice Announcement 2016-378, enacted 2016.12.27

Therefore, to be qualified to apply for the spouse visa, one who wishes to apply for marriage visa can choose one among two exams. One is the Korean exam for marriage migrant which is organized by the Korean Embassy. Marriage women have to obtain the required hours in the class assigned by the Ministry of Justice and pass the Korean exam with questions and examiners are from the Korean Embassy. There are about 18 Korean classes in Vietnam is designed by the Korean Ministry of Justice where the marriage migrants can take the course and get the certificate.

As the law was implemented since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014, there are institutes are designated to test the Korean ability of marriage migrant, among 7 official diplomatic offices in the world, Ho Chi Minh Education Institute of Education which belonged to the Korean Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam was designated. At the same time, there are 120 designated Sejong Center (Sejong Hakdang) at 103 regions of 52 nations are also in this list.

By February 2014, there are 91 Sejong Center (only focusing on Korean language education) in 45 countries. In Vietnam, there are 6 campuses of Sejong Center at provinces and cities including Da Lat, Thai Nguyen, Ha Noi, Ho Chi Minh and Hue. At each campus, Sejong Center is located at local university. The center is organized and run as collaborations between a Vietnamese university/institute and a Korean university/institute.

**Table 4.** Designated Sejong Centers in Vietnam

Number	Province/City	Institute Name (Organizations)
1	Da Lat	Da Lat Sejong Center Da Lat University – Korean Foreign University
2	Thai Nguyen	Thai Nguyen Sejong Center Thai Nguyen University – Keimyung University
3	Ha Noi	Hanoi Sejong Center 1 Hanoi University of Humanity and Social Sciences – Busan Foreign University
		Hanoi Sejong Center 2 Hanoi National University of Foreign Language – Human Resources Development Service of Korea
4	Ho Chi Minh	Ho Chi Minh Sejong Center The University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City – Chosun University
5	Hue	Hue Sejong Center Hue University – bbb Korea (NGO)

Beside Sejong Center majoring in Korean Education, there are also Sejong Culture Institutes as 27 centers in 24 countries. In Vietnam, the institute assigned is Sejong Center of Korean Cultural Institute in Vietnam, located at 49 Nguyen Du street, Hai Ba Trung District, Hanoi.

Beside Cultural Institute and Sejong centers working on educating Korean language and Korean culture, in December 2014, the Korean Embassy in Vietnam proposed to the Ministry of Justice two other centers for Korean education which are located in Hai Duong and Hai Phong. They got accepted as the institute assigned by the Ministry of Justice in January 2015.

**Table 5.** New Korean language centers in Hai Duong, Hai Phong

<b>Hai Duong Province</b>	Name: Vietnam – Korea Cultural Exchange Center Hai Duong Korean Class Phone: +84-4-3787-8640/8644, 070-7538-1542 Homepage: <a href="http://www.koviculture.net">www.koviculture.net</a> Facebook: <a href="http://www.facebook.com/koviculture.net">www.facebook.com/koviculture.net</a>
<b>Hai Phong City</b>	Name: Korean Globalization Movement Center (한글세계화운동본부) Hai Phong Korean Center Phone: +84-93-690-3040 / +84-98-311-5837 Homepage: <a href="http://2043.evnara.com">http://2043.evnara.com</a>

Among them, the Korean class in Hai Duong is organized and run by the Korean Vietnam Cultural Exchange Center which is a decade old non-governmental organization in Hanoi since the 1990s. Their office locates in Hanoi with also other Korean language and cultural classes (without assigned by the Ministry of Justice). The class in Hai Phong city is run by Korean Globalization Movement Center which the head office is in South Korea.



A.



B.

**Figure 7.** A. Korean center's board in Hai Duong city, Vietnam and B.

Korean center in Hai Duong city, Vietnam

The reason for opening the classes in Hai Duong and Hai Phong was because of these are two regions with the highest number of women marrying to Korean men in the North of Vietnam.

When the wave of marrying foreigner first started in the North of Vietnam in the first half of the 2000s, the very first cases were back in Hai Phong. Hai Phong is a coastal city which the main economic income came from fisheries. As it was the village of fisheries people was used to be on the sea for long and their personality also founded as opened and extrovert. However,



fishing is one of the most unstable jobs among agricultural jobs as they can pay gradually. Fish village are usually villages with the highest poverty rate. During the first half of the 2000s, the wave of marrying Taiwanese and Korean had boomed in the Mekong River Delta which caused the harsh gender imbalance among the marriage age population in these provinces. To deal with the problem, local governments had decided to tighten the numbers of marriage by taking longer in the documents scanning process. The brokers started to look for new brides shortages in other part of Vietnam as the Northern Vietnam.

Compare to the South, women in the North are considered as more conservative and traditional, according more influenced by Confucianism from China, as well as the society was originally and always driven under of the Communism idea. Among poor countryside areas in the North by that time, people in coastal communes in Hai Phong who live next to the ocean were ones open to adventures and migration. The history of many communes also witnessed many of their ancestors migrated through the sea to Hong Kong, Taiwan and China in the past due to the poverty. People here were used to migration and they were less conservative than others who live in far from the sea. At the same time, women in fishing village do not have many options for their job choices. As the fishing job is usually of the men, women usually stay at home doing housework and meshing the fish net. As living near to the sea, the land is salinized and hard to growing crops. At the same time, violence in fishing families has also reported as the highest rate. Women do not have many choices then they choose international marriage as the way to help their families and themselves to get out of the poverty. Hai Phong was then the place brokers found to pursue women to get married to foreign men, first Taiwanese, later Korean (Hoang, 2009). After booming in Hai Phong, international marriage started in other provinces in the Hong River Delta nearby too, Hai Duong included. That explained why the embassy of South Korea in Vietnam proposed Korean classes in Hai Duong and Hai Phong as the demand here was huge.

Including these 2 new institutes, until 2019 March, there are 10 institutes in Vietnam which are indicated by the Ministry of Justice in educating Korean language for marriage migrant women candidates; one among them is the cultural institute. It then makes Vietnam only ranks after China at the number of language institute assigned by the Ministry of Justice, which is also understandable as Vietnam has a huge number of marriage migrant women in

South Korea. In many years, the number of Vietnamese spouses in South Korea always chased after the number of Chinese marriage migrant women, however, recently the number of Vietnamese brides has been increasing and outnumbered Chinese marriage migrant women.

After attending enough required hours at these designated classes, marriage migrant women candidates are able to qualify themselves for spouse visa application in the Embassy/Consulate. The classes are usually managed in 4 months with 2 hours class every day, for example in the case of the Korean institute in Hai Duong province. Except those who passed the level 1 in the Test of Fluency in Korean Language can immediately apply for the spouse visa, most of candidates take these classes.

The classes are the most obvious example to show how the South Korean law has changed in managing and controlling the number of marriage migrant women coming to the country.

*When I got married nine years ago, the process was pretty quick, as long as the documents are enough, everything is fine. But recently the Korean embassy in Vietnam asked the women who marries to Korean man to have to pass one Korean language-cultural exam to get the visa – Interviewee 2*

This new requirement is expected to prevent fake marriages as international marriage was considered as “the easiest passport to South Korea”<sup>24</sup>; at the same time, it aims to educate marriage migrant women South Korean for the better communication between them and their husband and their family in law when they arrive in South Korea.

At the same time, to prevent violence in multicultural families caused by the husband has mental illnesses or some problems, the South Korean Government also issued and adjusted the requirements and laws for South Korean husbands and marriage matchmaking businesses in South Korea.

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<sup>24</sup> As the ‘Korean Wind’ became a typhoon during 1994 and 1996, and as international marriage became the easiest passport to Korea, ‘fake marriages’ became a social problem in 1996 (Lee H.-K. , 2008).

In October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2010, the South Korean government enacted the “International Marriage Information Program”, which became mandatory since March 7<sup>th</sup> 2011. This educational program is designed to help South Koreans who want to marry people from country (China, Vietnam, Philippines, Cambodia, Mongolia, Uzbekistan and Thailand) with relatively high rates of divorce and escape for Korean citizen in the past. In other words, a Korean citizen who is preparing for international marriage with a candidate from above countries needs to complete the program so that the marriage certificate can be issued. The program is three hour program that introduce:

- (1) Introduction to the politics system, culture of the country of future spouse;
- (2) Introduction to Government policies such as visa issuance procedure and requirements;
- (3) Counseling from civil groups and marriage migrants or those who had married to foreigner.

Moreover, a South Korean man is asked to meet several conditions in mental and physical health, as well as the economic requirement to be able to join the international marriage market. At the same time, South Korean marriage matchmaking businesses are asked to provide accurate information about South Korean men to their marriage candidate to the foreign country as well.

According to the Immigration Law issued by the Ministry of Justice, which was started from the first day of 2019, the candidate who wants to get marry to foreigners need to meet with the below economic conditions as their income within the whole previous year <sup>25</sup>.

In case that the person who invite his/her spouse to South Korea has no family relation, 2 members are counted as that person and his/her spouse. For those who got married once then divorced, but having children still less than 18 years old and parents, they are listed as members in their family.

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<sup>25</sup> 법무부고시 제 2018-317 호, 2018.12.28 일부개정

**Table 6.** Economic requirement for Korean bridegroom in 2019

Type	Family with 2 members	Family with 3 members	Family with 4 members	Family with 5 members	Family with 6 members
Standard of income (won)	17,439,168	22,560,192	27,681,240	32,802,240	37,923,264

*\*For the family with 7 members and more, plus 5,121,024 won each.*

Actually, the standard income requirement was first discussed and implemented in 2014. After years, it has been changed by increasing throughout the years. Compared to the first requirement set on economic requirements for Korean husband, the amount of money requirement kept increasing every year. Since 2014 to until 2019, there were 4 adjustments had made.

**Table 7.** Economic requirement for Korean bridegroom, 01.01 - 31.12.2015

Type	Family with 2 members	Family with 3 members	Family with 4 members	Family with 5 members	Family with 6 members
Standard of income (won)	15,135,091	19,579,507	24,023,937	28,468,368	32,912,784

*\*For the family with 7 members and more, plus 4,444,430 won each.*

This law aims to prevent cases that the marriage businesses provide fake information about the husband's situation to get him a wife. There were many cases in the past reported that many marriage migrant women found that their husbands were not that wealthy as they introduced when visiting Vietnam that they are company directors or managers.

At the same time, beside the economic requirement that the South Korean husband needs to meet, they also need to prove their good physical and mental health for the health requirement. It was because of many cases reported Vietnamese marriage migrant women facing domestic violence, even murder from their husband who has the mental illness. The noteworthy point here is that when they were introduced to their husband in Vietnam, the broker faked the husband profile and stated that he was in a good health condition.

The lack in the law of managing marriage matchmaking businesses could be the reason for the fake profiles. At the same time, marriage matchmakers working as free businesses as well as a lot of supporting programs for multicultural families in South Korea attracted the huge number of foreign women to get married to South Korea men. Marriage matchmaking businesses then had a chance to blossom until the middle of the 2000s. However, to face with problems that brokers brought in faking profiles of the husband, which led to many side effect later, the South Korean Government revised the law on the activity of marriage businesses. The next chapter will discuss about this legal revision as well as the reaction of the marriage matchmaker towards new changes in law.

### **6.3. Formalizing South Korean brokers' activities and still-out-of-control Vietnamese brokers**

After freeing South Korea brokers' activities for a long time, along with a lot of problems happened in multicultural families due to the job of brokers, the South Korean Government started to pay more attention on the activity of marriage matchmaker. At the same time, as time passed by, the huge number of marriage migrant women came to South Korea via marriage matchmaker businesses also asked the Government to keep adjusting the law on these marriage matchmakers.

On December 14<sup>th</sup> 2007, the National Assembly issued the Law No.8688 titled "Law on Marriage Matchmaking Business", which was enacted from June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008 in order to manage the marriage matchmaking business and protect citizen's rights. According to the new law, the domestic marriage matchmaking business is working as "reporting system", meanwhile international marriage matchmaking business is managed in a "registering system". At the same time, the registering system also helps in managing international marriage husband candidate such as the requirement for their education level. After started to implemented since June 15 2008, the number of marriage matchmaking business started to increase gradually annually from 922 in 2008, 1215 (2009), 1253 (2010) to 1529 in 2011.

**Table 8. Law on Marriage Matchmakers from 2007-2017**

<b>Law No.</b>	<b>Adjust/New Content</b>
No.8688 (2007.12.14 revised, 2008.06.15 implemented)	As international marriage is rapidly growing and causing social issues, legal regulations on marriage matchmaking business are established in order to contribute to the formation of a healthy marriage cultural.
No.10301 (2010.05.17 revised, 2010.11.18 implemented)	Marriage businesses are required to provide information of two marriage candidates to each other; as well as the translation service; Abolishing the deposit system and unifying the reporting and registering processes at the city – district – county.
No. 11283 (2012.02.01 revised, 2012.08.02 implemented)	Only those who are 18 years old and more can participate in international marriage via matchmaking businesses. Any activities such as group meetings are prohibited. The person who has mental illness or has been arrested as prostitution crime or other in recent 10 years is asked to provide notarized related documents for the pre-marriage personal information collection. The company is required to be capitalized at 100 million won at least in the beginning and manage their labels and advertisements to avoid human rights.
No.11672 (2013.03.22 revised, 2013.09.23 implemented)	In the past, if any marriage matchmakers violated local laws of a foreign country, there was no sanctions for them. However, since the new regulation is implemented, those who violated the foreign local law will not be able to operate the marriage matchmaking business again and be notified to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade for their violations.
No. 12078 (2013.08.13 revised, 2014.02.14 implemented)	In order to prevent the harm that international marriage matchmaking may cause to the participant, as well as to establish a strong legal regulations for healthy marriage culture via matchmakers, a survey on international marriages will be conducted every 3 years. A promoting video will be designed in order to enhance public awareness about international marriage.
No. 13177 (2015.02.03 revised, 2015.08.04 implemented)	The Ministry of Gender Equality and Families revise and issue the standard contract which will be used in marriage matchmaking business. The ministry of Gender Equality and Families collaborates with the mayors/head chiefs of cities/boroughs in designing educational programs for

Law No.	Adjust/New Content
	marriage matchmaking businesses in order to reduce potential harm for participants.
No.14060 (2016.03.02 revised, 2016.03.02 implemented)	<p>The legislative purpose of this law is clearly to manage the marriage matchmaking businesses as well as to protect the participants' rights and create the healthy marriage business culture. Additionally, the law specifies the role of the mayors/head chiefs of cities/boroughs in supervising the activities of marriage matchmaking businesses, including examining the personal information provision, etc.</p> <p>Another purpose of the law on marriage matchmaking business is to guarantee the compensation in case there is any loss happens to the participant. Since the international marriage participants are those who usually experience the low economic – social position in society, they face the difficulty in checking the marriage matchmaker's liability for losses. In case any risk happens, as long as the participant proves that he/she has not done anything wrong, the compensation is guaranteed.</p>
No. 14441 (2016.12.20 revised, 2016.12.20 implemented)	To make it easier for the general public's understanding, the Japanese style Chinese character “dang-he” is replaced by the Korean style Chinese character “he-dang”.
No. 14405 (2016.12.20 revised, 2017.3.21 implemented)	<p>Changing the word “from the consulate” to “from the notarization specialized consul” in the Article 10 Section 2-1 on the Act on Notarial Acts Done at Overseas Diplomatic and Consular Missions.</p> <p>Introducing the educational system about the notarization specialized consul, as well as prescribing the regulations for examining the official documents of the country of residence.</p>
No. 14700 (2017.3.21 revised, 2017.9.22 implemented)	As the proposal of the Anti-Corruption & Civil Rights Commission and the regulation of the Secretariat of the National Assembly, the legal penalty deviation is revised from the standard of one year in imprisonment and 10 million won.
No. 15203 (2017.12.12 revised, 2017.12.12 implemented)	Currently, the status of international marriage matchmaking businesses as well as the cases of victims of this businesses are surveyed every 3 years; from now, the activity of domestic marriage matchmaking businesses will be also included in the survey in order to provide the whole picture of matchmaking business in the country.

After freeing marriage matchmaking businesses in South Korea for a long time, in 2007, the law of brokers activities was revised and enacted since 2008. Since 2008, there were 11 times in total the law on brokers activities was reviewed, redesigned or newly applied. Throughout 11 times of regulations, the main purpose that lawmakers aim was to create the healthy international marriage culture as well as healthy marriage matchmaking business. To do that, the law focuses on the ability of the company in providing accurate information for participants as well as their liability in taking care of risk if any risk happens. These regulations are based on the reality that many participants were cheated by inaccurate information about their partner provided by the marriage brokers. Many of them participated in illegal group meetings which is claimed as against the human rights even though they were not informed that it was illegal. In other cases, many of Korean husbands suffered the risk of brides escape from the marriage after arriving in South Korea, even though they paid the huge amount of money for the marriage.

After many law regulations implemented, marriage matchmaking businesses need to meet more many requirements as well as their activities are checked regularly. The owner is now need to have this certain amount of money as well as prove their liability for losses in order to open the business. Many existed companies could not meet the requirements, as result, this led to the bankruptcy of many companies. According to the statistics of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, after 2014, the number of marriage matchmaking business decreased gradually every year from 449 businesses in 2014 to 403 businesses in 2015, 362 businesses in 2016 and until May 2018, there were only 362 businesses left.

The decreasing number of marriage matchmaking business can be also explained by the other reason as the pool of candidate who wished to marry foreign spouse has been decreasing throughout more than 10 years since international marriage via matchmaker phenomenon started. As the huge number of South Korean reached to the marriage age during the 2000s and the beginning of the 2010s, as time passed by, less men in the marriage age or late marriage age demand for foreign wife as many as before. As well as in the past, the Internet was not popular, the marriage matchmaking companies/brokers are the main bridge to connect international couples. As the Internet and social media spread over the countries, many Vietnamese women and South Korean men these days got to know each other through the Internet instead of the



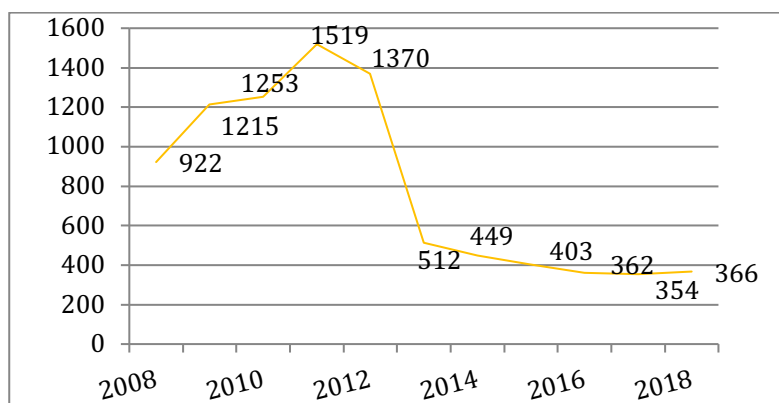
marriage matchmaking companies. On many Facebook pages, such as: Korean Marriage, etc. which is written in Vietnamese, new feeds about Korean men looking for a Vietnamese wife pops up sometimes.

On the other hand, South Korean men, who is over the marriage age and looking for a Vietnamese wife, also have another option as choosing a Vietnamese women who had married to South Korean men before but divorced. According to the Marriage – Divorce Statistics from the Social Statistics Department, the number of divorce between Vietnamese women and South Korean marriage has been increasing every year. These women already had South Korean citizen and are currently living in South Korea. Many Korean men will ask the marriage broker to match which these women since they are currently resident in South Korea and able to communicate in South Korea quite fluently.

*The marriage process took much shorter and less complicated than going to Vietnam for the meeting and doing the marriage procedures and documents.* – Interviewee 20

The visa application process in Vietnam takes quite lot of time as well as it requires the bride to pass the Korean language exam and the interview from the Embassy. In the past, many cases proved that the long document process in Vietnam did not guarantee a visa to come to South Korea.

Last but not least, after many years at peak, the trend of marrying Vietnamese women has simply faded away naturally. The number of marriage matchmaking business then decreased as their customer is getting smaller.



**Figure 8.** The number of registered Korean marriage agencies (2008 – 2018)

Source: Seoul, 2017

Even though the number of marriage matchmaking business decreased significantly but their quality has been guaranteed to be upgraded. It is because the new law regulations only prove the qualified companies to join the market.

Usually, Korean international marriage matchmaking businesses have already some Vietnamese brokers in contact. When a Korean man registers for a service in South Korea they can even show pictures beforehand to ask the guy whom he wanted to meet.

When the man book a package in South Korea and give them this amount of money, when he comes to Vietnam to Vietnamese brokers will be in charge of taking care and bringing him to meetings. Usually, one man can meet up to many women and found that who they want to spend more time with and to get married with. Of course, those group meeting activities are illegal which is against the human right. As the Korean laws have been strengthened , the South Korean brokers are asked to stop those activities, as well as the South Korean men are required to take courses on understanding international marriage and the context of the country where they are heading to. However, the Vietnamese brokers side is out of the legality, even though they are in charge of the whole process in Vietnam. Vietnamese brokers prepare a full package of marriage including meetings, wedding, and honeymoon as well as marriage documents and visa application in Vietnam.

It is pretty obvious that, meanwhile the South Korean marriage brokers' job is getting formalized throughout the time due to the changes in law, Vietnamese brokers are still out of controlled even though the Government had several adjustments, but still have its own huge power in controlling the market.

Most of Vietnamese brides I met in the Korean class campus met their husband through brokers. After they got married at the bride's hometown, the bridegroom went back to South Korea and the bride applied for Korean visa or studying Korean language and waiting to apply for a Korean spouse visa. This process usually takes from three to six months, depending on the bride's Korean ability and Korean education level.

Even though stated in the Korean law that meeting with more than two people or group meeting is prohibited when the Korean citizen got introduced to international marriage through matchmaking business; in reality, it still

happens. Sometimes the number of women in that meeting jumps to ten people. There are even fights/competitions between brokers to get the Korean male to meet with Vietnam women whom they are in contact with. One of the interviewee said in a heart-rending voice tone as they feel the lives of Vietnamese women who go to those meetings like “*vegetables sold at the market*”. They said that it was like Korean men looks at them and decides to buy them or not.

But, there are many dark sides in the “market” of marrying Korean husband. Usually, a woman comes to a meeting and if she is matched with a Korea guy, like they both agree on a marriage, they will spend two and three days after that for weeding and honeymoon. The wedding is already on the “marriage package” of the company that the bridegroom signed with in Korea. During the week that a Korean bridegroom in Vietnam, the quick wedding can be organized right after the meeting or the next time when the bridegroom comes back, which is more expensive. Either with the weeding or not, they spend time together for the “honeymoon” after the weeding/meeting.

Quick meeting and a short time spending together, of course is not enough to get to know each other. Time and language are definitely limited, however, there are even several other outside factors creating some complicacies for these young relationships. There were cases recognized that the bridegroom’s side decided to cancel the marriage, even though they did the weeding and the bride was pregnant. An interviewee told me a story of her roommate in the Korean class dormitory that the husband side wanted the bride to not keep the baby and cancel the marriage since they heard that this bride does not have a good personality as they thought that she had before.

One of the reasons they thought in that way, as well as one of the several outside factors mentioned above was the broker. There are always Korean brokers and Vietnamese brokers interacting and to manage Vietnamese women and Korean men. In this case, the unhappy story is partly created by the Vietnamese broker. The brokers only care about the money, and as many women came to them, they get paid by the certain amount of money for marriage to manage meetings with Korean men.

*This market is evil than anyone can think of.* – Interviewee 8

Not all the women who want to change their lives by meeting a Korean husband can easily meet their Korean one and get married, hold a Korean visa in hand and go to South Korea. That is a long journey in which the broker plays an important role in the decisions from deciding which girls can go meet the Korean guys who arrived to the city today to even the whole process during the time the bride learns Korean and applies for a visa.

*You may meet some “broker” really nice who understands your story and helps you to meet a Korea guy, but you may meet an evil broker who wants to benefit on you, not only the money but also physicality. – Interviewee 5*

The broker has the power in their hand, they can effect to the husband's decision by making up the stories. And the Vietnamese newly brides, with the limited Korean ability, remain passive in these kinds of situations. So during the time staying at the dormitory and studying Korean, they may have been asked inappropriately from the broker-guy.

The director of the campus told me stories of his students have been asked by broker-guy in a way that is not appropriate at all. If they do not agree with the deal, they can make up the stories to tell back to their Korean husband family or become not helpful during the whole process of learning Korean at school and preparing for the spouse visa. Brokers do play an important role in the whole process, not like my expectation when I thought that they only had a role in introducing a Vietnamese girl to a Korean man. They manage the girls and the men, arrange meetings until the Korean man found their partner; they also organize the wedding and send the couple to the honeymoon. After the wedding, when the Korean husband back to Korea, the broker guides the bride to complete the procedures like sending them to Korean class, taking the exam, getting certificates, and applying for the marriage visa. Thus, they were everywhere in the process when the marriage women migrant first meet their husband until they get the visa and go through the immigration at the airport.

When I was visiting the campus in Hai Duong, it was the closing ceremony of the 24<sup>th</sup> class; the broker-guy also came to the office after the ceremony in order to pick up certificates of some customers since they were not there.

In Vietnam, brokers are in charge of everything as they manage meetings between Vietnamese women and Korea men, they have a “full package of marriage” including meetings, weddings, honeymoon, documents procedures and Korean class for brides as well as applying spouse visa at the Korean Embassy/Consultant in Vietnam. Vietnamese brokers has powers in their hand, and at the same time, they make a lot of money through marriages they participate in not only during the time of two candidates apply and prepare for the marriage but also in little details like they do money exchange with the high fee belonging to them.

Usually Korean bridegroom’s side will be the one who pays for most of the fee in setting meetings, honeymoon, and gifts for the bride’s side and also even money for the bride to travel to the meeting locations and staying during the meetings. However, in reality, there are some expenses which are listed in the list to go to the bride’s will not go to the bride’s side, but brokers’ pockets. Not only that, the bride is also required to the certain amount of money to be set up in the meetings (mostly) and even in some expenses later. It is what is different from the past since when international marriage has just started, brokers even went to families with daughters who are in marriage age to ask them to go the meetings, even give them money beforehand to encourage them to go and meet for candidate husband. However, as many Vietnamese women wanted to get married to Korean men, the brides need to pay an amount of money to go the meetings. As the demand for Korea husband grow fast, the brokers even now have more powers.

Differently from Korean brokers as legal businesses recognized by the law, Vietnamese brokers are not agencies or companies as all the activities of running businesses on matching couples and marriage are totally illegal. Vietnamese brokers are either those who have connections with Korean brokers or those are workers who used to stay in South Korea and can speak Korea. A noteworthy thing here is that even if Vietnamese married migrant women in South Korea get divorced with their Korean husband they still choose to stay in South Korea, they thus cannot be a broker back to Vietnam who can manage meetings occasionally in the site. Meanwhile, worker migrants have to leave Korea after their working expiration and later in Vietnam, with the Korean ability they can work with future Korean bridegrooms in Vietnam.

#### 6.4. Marriage women gain their independency; New type of marriage broker – marriage migrants.

Since the phenomenon of marrying Taiwanese/Korean men started in 1990s, as time passed by, the Governments and brokers had many changes in approaching the topic as well as in their reactions towards the topic. As studied in the first finding in chapter 5, marriage migrant women participated in international marriage in the 1990s and early-2000s are mainly motivated by the economic reason, their decisions were also influenced by their families. However, as time passes by, migrant women nowadays are more active in participating in their marriage decision and procedures; notwithstanding the economic reason remains as one of the most important causes. This section will first examine the change in migrant women as they become more active; later, the economic motivation will be mentioned with recent references.

The increasing independency of a marriage woman migrant can be viewed as they are increasingly acknowledgeable about what is a transnational marriage, they later became voluntary and independent in their decision-making. In the past, there were many cases of Vietnamese women had to choose the marriage migration to help her family overcome the poverty. Even in some cases, women were forced into these transnational marriages. However, as time passed by, many women make the decision of marrying to a foreign man based on their own idea and thought. They chose to move to South Korea and be a wife, a mother of the family because they wanted to do that.

*My sister married fourteen, fifteen years ago; it was because of the economic situation of our family. Later with me, it was just I turned to 27 but was not married by that time and **my sister found someone she thought that he will be nice to me** – Interviewee 3*

In the case of this interviewee, she decided to get married not because of the economic reason but rather than she found that her husband was a nice guy. Even though fourteen, fifteen years ago, her sister got married to her South Korean husband due to the family's poor economic condition.

Moreover, the quote also mentioned one new type of marriage broker which is migrant women who become brokers themselves. They usually connect couples within their circles of family, relatives and friends. They play

an important role in increasing the number of Vietnamese marriage migrant women in South Korea, as well as creating the network of Vietnamese brides from the same region in Vietnam who are now probably living in the short-distance in South Korea as well. In this study, the increasing number of marriage migrant women as marriage brokers is not considered as Vietnamese illegal brokers, since they usually introduce couples voluntarily and among their community like relatives or friends. Because it is not a transaction, it is not considered as illegal.

Looking at this interviewee's marriage motivation, it also showed that the change in the making marriage decision of Vietnamese women as they became more independent. This can be proved in the following quote which also mentioned by the interviewee.

*Before coming to South Korea, I had been told about support programs that the South Korean Government had for multicultural families as well as school fee exemptions for multicultural children. That helped me feel much more stable. – Interviewee 3*

This quote showed that since the South Korean Government continuously issued policies and support programs, it has its effect in encouraging foreign migrant women to make a decision in marrying a South Korean man. In reality, marriage migrant women in South Korea receive many supporting programs which cover them since their first steps to the country. Language course and cultural class are provided freely to marriage migrant women through the dense network of MFSCs around the country. These MFSCs are also hosting jobs fairs for marriage migrant women in order to help them find a job and support the family. During the time a foreign wife is pregnant and raising the kid, she also gets economic support from the Government. During the pregnancy time, multicultural families get 500.000 won (approximately 438USD) per year. Since the baby is born until they turned 5 years old, economic support is provided annually with the amount of support decreased as the baby grows up. In comparison to South Korean families, who also get support from the Government, multicultural families get more support. Moreover, when they get to kindergarten and during six years in elementary school, all the school tuition is exempted. Due to the limitation of foreign mother in raising the children in South Korea, there is a program which provide

teachers to help multicultural children to study Korean language as well as to do school works. Multicultural families will register at MFSCs one or two years beforehand for the Korean teacher for their children. However, due to the huge number of multicultural families in South Korea as well as the vast demand for Korean teacher, this program is currently facing some difficulties in meeting the required number of Korean teacher.

Moreover, the independency of the women is also shown as they actively participate in international marriage. In the past, the broker used to go to the families whose daughters are in the age of marriage and ask them to go to the meetings to meet South Korean or Taiwanese men. The brokers even brought the family gifts and money beforehand to encourage them to go meet the foreign men. Later, all the whole process of married was managed by the broker. However, these days, thanks to the internet, the information become more accessible and young women can search for more from the internet about their husband, their husband's hometown or life in South Korea. On the other hand, as many Vietnamese women wanted to get married to Korean men, the brides even need to pay an amount of money to go the meetings. To join international marriage, young women these days seem to have to put a lot of effort, but along with that, they become more independent in making their decision between what they want and do not want.

Additionally, it is noteworthy that many recent cases of Vietnamese women got married to their South Korean husband as their second married, as well as the age gap between Vietnamese wives and South Korean husbands has been abridged, it proves the increasing independence and confidence of these Vietnamese marriage migrant women.

Despite the conception of many Korean men who are married to Vietnamese women are old and not able to married to Korean women, there are an increasing number of men in their thirties and even late twenties came to Vietnam to find a Vietnamese wife. They first contact the Korean dating and marriage company in South Korea and to then get introduced to the girls in Vietnam. The reason may vary, one of them could be that it is getting harder and harder for Korean men getting married to Korean women in South Korea.

At the same time, looking in long term of this kind of marriage, it may help to provide a reason for this new trend of young Korean bridegroom. It is



proved that Vietnam has been improved their position in the international market. There are an increasing number of international investors coming to Vietnam and investing in business, especially Vietnam is famous among Koreans not only because of beautiful sceneries but also economic potential. In term of big corporations, the huge investment is pouring into Vietnam from South Korea via projects of Samsung, LG, etc., make the Korean became the largest foreign direct investment (FDI) investor in Vietnam. Moreover, social projects and small investors also look at the Vietnamese market. When foreigners are welcomed in this Southeast Asian country, there are still several difficulties that they have to face with papers and administrative procedures. Having a Vietnamese wife means that it is much easier to have someone who understands the language and the way locals do in business.

This trend is also proved through the cases of Vietnamese – Korean multicultural families in the past. Many of multicultural families after settling down Korea, recently they think about investing money and business back in Vietnam. The investment may simply from buying lands and get authorized under the name of the Vietnamese wife, to running the business. However, before the law about the Vietnamese marriage migrant women' nationality changed, it was not easy to do it. Since 2011, after the visit of the Vietnamese government Prime Minister to South Korea, two governments came to agree on that the Vietnamese Marriage Migrant Women can keep two nationalities. Before that, they have to disclaim the Vietnamese nationality to get the Korean nationality.

In Shin and Hang's on-going research in 2019, they have been proved that there is the capital flow from Vietnam back to South Korea. After the Vietnamese married to their Korean husband, first of all they send money – remittances back to their families in Vietnam to improve the family's economic situation. Later, when they are able to work outside, they spend their own money and some of them send money back to Vietnam to buy land or invest to small families' business. The third way is their Korean husband joined the investment too. These ways of investment created the network called transnational ethnic network (migration-development nexus).

One among other different things between marriage cases recently compared to the past is that many of Vietnamese women marrying Korean men had been married once before, some of them even have kids, even more than

one. An interviewee told me that she had one daughter at home and since she is now here (at the dormitory for the language program) studying Korean, her Korean husband told her that they will bring her daughter to Korea too. Her plan is also to settle the life first in Korea first, get familiarize with everything and then bring her child to Korea to unite.

I also visited another student of the campus in the dormitory and met her daughter living in the dorm room with her. The woman is in the early pregnancy and receiving the special treatment. She told me the story of her life and she had three kids already, the biggest is already 18 years old. Her Korean husband is also really taking care of not only her but also her children. Every time he visits or just in no special occasions, his family (the mother in law) will bring gifts for not only her, her parents but also her children. They also promised to bring the kids to Korea if she wanted to.

What I found interesting during this research is that the Korean family side has no judgement with the Vietnamese daughter-in-law if they already had children, which is usually rare in other marriage cases. They are even extremely genuine. Probably it is because of these Korean families of late marriage male are urge to have kids. Most of the Korean men coming to Vietnam to find their partner are over their forties. Their families, as a typical Asian family – most of them come from the countryside, always wanted to have kids to continue the family's records. Thus, if the Vietnamese bride already had kids, it proves that she is able and willing to give birth again.

The idea of international marriage has also influenced on young girls' perception and action who are from the region with the high rate of marriage migrant women. The research on international marriage of Hoang Ba Thinh stated that many young teenagers, some are even in secondary school decided to choose international marriage instead of studying further or being domestic worker. Many of them started to learn Korean language since secondary school and looked for more information and how to marriage a South Korean man instead of focusing on studying. They have an idea that marrying a Korean man will better their life as the dream of living South Korea comes true. It is noteworthy that many cases of young girls decided to choose international married nowadays is not because of the financial situation anymore. It relates to the 'human capital' which is mentioned by (Chiswick, 2000) that people choose to invest in migration as the same way as they could invest in education

or vocational training, and will migrate if the expected rate of return from higher wages in the destination country is greater than the cost they have to invest (Chiswick, 2000).

At the same time, young girls choose international marriage with South Korean men as they are influenced by South Korean drama and cultural wave. The generation born in the 1990s which is turning to the age of marriage these years have been familiarizing themselves with South Korean dramas and pop culture since born. The effects of Taiwan/Korean waves have started since the 1990s and rapidly expanded throughout Vietnam. Taiwan and Korean dramas accounted for 40% the total drama hours in Vietnamese television. The South Korean wave was not only limited in dramas and music, but at the same time with fashion, cosmetics, cuisines, medicine, etc.

South Korean movies particularly often portray masculinity in an appealing manner to women; depict male characters as “many charismatic”, “femininely tender”, “sensitive” or willing to sacrifice for their loved ones. Such romantic stories often told from a woman’s perspective, which makes Vietnamese women form a very good impression of those foreign men (BinhPham, 2013), especially while Vietnamese families are influenced strongly deeply by Confucianism and the hierarchy in the family made the gender inequalities stronger. In the family, the husband or the father has much more the power and decide everything in the family. At the same time, as the agriculture culture, violence in the Vietnamese families are quite common, which lead to the image of Korean and Taiwanese describes in the dramas as romantic and gentle is really impressed many young girls. At the same time, looking at the successful cases of women have been marrying Taiwanese and Korean men young girls are more motivated to get married to foreign men.

Even though marriage migration motivations became more diverse, for example the influence of South Korea cultural wave mentioned above, the main reason is remaining as the economic motivation. In the past, it was understandable that the reason creating the wave of marrying Taiwanese and Korean men was because of the poverty. Many years after “Doi Moi”, many regions still faced the poverty. At the same time, as the education level was lower than standard and South Korean cultural products were blossoming everywhere, marrying a foreigner back then was a trend. However, nearly thirty years after Renovation, as the country has completed so many targets like

poverty rate, elementary education rate, clean water rate, electricity rate, etc., to discover more than a case of the women decided to marry a foreign man because of her poor family situation was surprising.

The interviewee told me her story as she got married to her ex Vietnamese husband for nearly fifteen years and had three children together. During that time, she spent all the money to send him to South Korea as a worker. He stayed there as a legal worker and sent back money to the family and the children, but after his due is over, he decided to stay as an illegal worker. The thing was he betrayed the family and his wife and left home a wife and three other children needed to feed. The woman took her first child to Hanoi to find jobs, because there was nothing in the house after she invested everything for her husband and the husband side family also refused her. She told the story when the family has nothing left, she brought her child to Hanoi with an empty stomach and as she spent last money to buy some instant noodles, she spent those food all for her child. The story questioned at a point that, how can a mother and a daughter in the 2010s could not able to feed herself food. I realized the economy has been growing really fast but actually not every one's life has been upgraded. This type of story was not rare even in the 2019, many of Vietnamese women decided to get married to their South Korean husband because of the same reason.

Against the expectation of the economic motivation for the marriage was gone, the fact is that the reason for marriage migration became more diverse as well as the economic motivation is still remaining as the important one. Luckily, thanks to media and technology the marriage migrant women candidates nowadays have more access to know better, which also helped them to become more independent and active in decision-making.

Anyway, as result, the marriage migrant women are becoming more confident in creating their happy marriage life in South Korea. That is corresponding to the independence that marriage migrant women gained recently in making their decisions.

In the past, many women were forced into international marriage because of their family economic situation even though that was not what they wanted. However, as time passed by, women are getting more power and they could even make a no decision if that is not what they want. The following story

of a woman who is looking for a South Korean husband for her daughter is an example. Looking at other families in the commune whose daughters got married to Taiwanese men or Korean men and sent remittance back to their families, the women also wanted her daughter who was in the age of 20s to get marriage and have a better life in a foreign country.

*I have been working in the association for women in the commune so I know some of people who work as brokers. I even set up some meetings for my daughter to meet Korean men, however she refused it. She cried and begged me to not send her to the meetings. I then could not do that. [...] She is now living in the next commune and they (the daughter and her husband) are working in the factory nearby. They may not give me many economic supports as other families (whose daughter got married to foreign men) but they are happy together and their children visited me quite often. – Interviewee 16*

The woman's case was not the only one in the commune, or in other rural areas, many of families who have debts or have been through a very difficult financial situation chose international marriage for their daughter. They do wish a better life for their daughter, but at the same time, they do think about international marriage as a livelihood for a family. In the past, there were many cases showed that the women chose international marriage as that was their parents want to. Young women in the family feel the pressure and the duty from their family situation, and as they are a daughter, they may choose international marriage intentionally or listen to their parent's voice. As the nation's culture is strongly influenced by Confucianism, relationship and hierarchy in the family as well as in the society is strengthen. According to that, the woman have to follow their husband and their family, daughter in the family also need to listen to their parent and they have the duty to pay back the family. That is why even though there were many women who did not want to get married to foreign men, they still participated in those marriage. Not many livelihood choices as well as the pressure from the family push young women to choose international marriage in the past.

Cases like the one of the daughter above was rare in the past, however, as time passed by, it became more common. The reason can be explained due to the increase of job opportunities in Vietnam.

In the past, after finishing high school education, young women from rural areas did not have many choices. They either choose further study if their families have enough economic condition, or migration to other parts of the country to work at the factories for example in the South. They could also choose to stay at the commune, do some farming jobs with their parents but it was not the wise choice to improve the economy of the family. Last, they could even choose international marriage which was considered as a quick way to help the family out and improve their lives.

Now since industrialization happens everywhere, there are many factories growing everywhere, especially in the suburb of cities, which aims to take advantage on the huge cheap labor source from rural areas and the transport hub position of the city at the same time. Women, especially young women from rural areas then have a choice to work at these factories to earn money and improve their families economy. They could work at these nearby factories but at the same time, stay nearby their parents. Comparing to the farming job, factory jobs give them a stable and better salary. As these women have jobs and make their own money, they can also contribute to improve their family's financial situation. By that, women have also gained their voices and power in the family. In the past, if the father is a breadwinner of the family, all of the decision in the family have made by him, you daughter now can have their own voices. They are independently economically active. They then can say no to the meetings that the parents set for themselves, which is exactly the case of the daughter of the women in the famous commune for marrying foreigners which I have mentioned above.

## **6.5. Discussion**

During the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, the international marriage between Vietnamese women and South Korean men has started and developed significantly. The trend of marriage Korean men and Vietnamese women is the complex combination between the states' roles, brokers' activities and marriage migrants. Even though each actor plays their role in their own ground and for their interests, it created a combination between them which later has helped to form the marriage migration regime of Vietnamese women in South Korea.

As time passed by, the way that both Governments approach the international marriage topic has changed, resulted in brokers and marriage migrants needed to change to adapt to the new environment. As the regime has developed, the formal cooperation is forming by both Vietnamese and South Korean Governments intentionally caring more on the topic, well-organized brokers' activities as well as active, independent and confident marriage migrant women.

The figure 9 in the end of this chapter will illustrate the development of the marriage migration regime of Vietnamese women in South Korea. As time passed by, the formalizing 'cooperation' is developed by qualified brokers, active South Korean Government, to-be-more-caring Vietnamese Government, and last but not least, active and independent Vietnamese women.

After the Grand Plan in 2006, the South Korean Government continuously issued laws on marriage matchmaking businesses, language requirement for marriage migrant women, economic – health requirements as well as training program for South Korean bridegrooms. These new strengthened law on brokers' activities led the number of marriage matchmaking business decreased. However, their quality has upgraded. The reason for the decreasing number of marriage brokers can be also explained as after twenty years since started, the pool for international marriage, both South Korean men and Vietnamese women, has narrowed down.

As an influence from the high sex ratio during the period from 1970 to 1980, the gender imbalance started to happen and led to a bride shortage phenomenon for Korean male born the 1970s and 1980s when they reached to marriage age. During the 1990s, 2000s and 2010s, as many of South Korean men were in or over the age of marriage, the demand of partner was huge. In order to deal with the shortage of brides, the number of marriage matchmaking businesses blossomed and quickly flourished during the 1990s and 2000s period. Turned to the 2010s, the number of South Korean men who faced difficulties in finding a partner has left not as much as before. At the same time, the stricter laws and regulations on marriage matchmaking business made the number of this business has been limited but upgraded in quality.

In Vietnam, the Government started first steps to recognize brokers instead of denying the role and the domination of brokers as the previous time.

In 2009, the law has adjusted to strengthen the penalty for illegal marriage matchmaking activities. Especially, in 2013, the new law was implemented, which recognized local women supporting centers as legal matchmakers, as long as they are non-profit.

In term of marriage migrant women, they became more independent and confident in their decision-making. The motivation in international marriage became more diverse, especially numbers of supporting programs for multicultural families in South Korea have helped them feel more stable. Either influencing from the Government's policy (language requirement) or self-reflection, marriage migrant women nowadays are more well-prepared before their marriage journey.

Noteworthy, the number of women, who got married to their South Korean husband as their second marriage is increasing, let to the age gap between Vietnamese brides and Korean husband smaller nowadays. The age gap was always being criticized as one of the reasons creating the conflicts inside the family. The big age gap created the difference in lifestyles between husband and wife, differences and the barrier in language make fights and even domestic violence inside the family. As the age of South Korean husband is getting younger, that also helped to narrow the age gap in multicultural families these days.

However, notwithstanding the motivation for marriage has become more diverse, the economic reason is still remaining as crucial. Luckily, thanks to media and technology the marriage migrant women candidates nowadays have more access to know better, which also helped them to become more independent and active in decision-making.



## The Development of the Regime: the Formal Cooperation

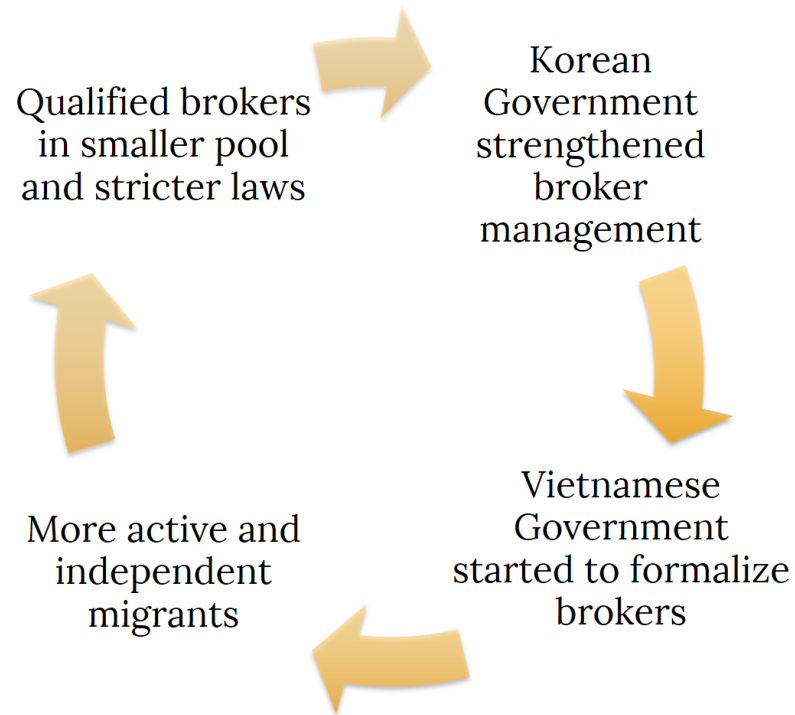


Figure 9. The development of the regime: the formalizing c

## Chapter 7. Conclusion

The contribution of this study is to apply the perspective of “regime” in studying the topic of marriage migrant. Regime is the familiar topic has been used in migration study, however, it has been rarely mentioned in marriage migration. As marriage migration has arisen these days as new common form of migration, applying the notion “regime” allows us to focus on actors participating in painting it. In this study, the marriage migrant regime includes three actors which are Governments, Brokers and Marriage Migrants themselves. Study the combination of these actors then allows us to answer the question of in which “regime” helps international marriage between Vietnamese women and Korean men bloom in those past years. At the same time, the regime/the combination help to answer such small but important question, like: why most of the marriage between Vietnamese women and Korean men are managed by brokers meanwhile broker business are illegal in Vietnam.

First, the regime first started with the combination in laws and policies between two Governments. Some of them are direct policies related to international marriage issue, but some of them are not related to marriage issue but indirectly influenced to the number of marriage between two country citizens. It seems to prove that Korean Government has issued more direct policies related to international marriage including policies on creating multicultural multi-ethnic society, legalizing Korean marriage brokers business, or adjust the law on activities of brokers in South Korea, adding requirements in economic and health condition for Korean men if they want to get married to a foreign woman through a broker business. The only direct policy that the Vietnamese Government has been issued was about the business activity in which marriage broker business is totally exhibited in Vietnam.

At the same time, indirect policies have influences on international marriage for example as Vietnam decided to open their market, and apply renovation in 1986, or Korean Government issued law on abortion. During the first period, Korean Government seems to be an actively policy issuing Government on the topic of international marriage and foreign marriage migrant women. At the same time, Vietnamese Government has much less

policies or research/study-related to this topic. Perhaps, Vietnamese Government has published their opinion on cross-border marriage as they do not accept any marriage broker business, in reality the truth is still that most of the marriage between Vietnamese women and Korean men are managed by brokers.

Second, as time passed by and international marriage has been become a hot topic of the society, the Vietnamese Government started to have more reaction towards this phenomenon. As at first, marriage matchmaking activities are illegal in Vietnam, the Government later assigned women support centers in province or city to take care of the job matchmaking marriage. It means that if there is a foreigner wanted to marry a Vietnamese citizen, that person can get introduced to their spouse through that women center network. Their main purpose is to support women in marriage, job market or daily lives; however, in the areas with a huge number of women out-migrate for marriages, these centers can do a job of matchmaking international marriage. To be able to do it, they are asked to register with the local ministry of justice and follow a lot of law processes. At the same time, these services of matchmaking international marriage have to be maintained as non-profit activity. Beside women supporting center, no other association, company, team/group or individuals are allowed to matchmaking marriage, no matter it is of profit or non-profit.

It shows that one more step, Vietnamese Government accept that international marriage is a trend and the demand for it is still huge. Taking a step in legalizing matchmaking in women support center is a step to legalize brokers' activity in general in the future. In the future, matchmaking jobs may become needed in the future as well as the country is developed in term of the economy and towards capitalism. It means that people is increasingly care about their jobs, the challenge those will drive people into working hard and making their own capital. As a nature of development, people will later less care about the marriage, individual life but rather focusing on their life, of course at the same time, social support is improved quite quick, changes in lifestyle has also changed. This is what have been happening in South Korea in the last decade as many Korean young people postpone their marriage age till really late; they rather spend those time in their career, access, or their own life. In the future, as the nature of development, things are expected in Vietnam in the same way. By that time, the government needs to have more actions in

encouraging people to date, marriage, having babies and continuing the population. It may not happen in the near future though, since Vietnam is still in the golden age period or past golden age period not too far, a huge percentage of the population is in the age of marriage and having babies. A step in inform the necessary of marriage brokers and legalize brokers activities in women support center will be the first forward step to make the legalizing process in the future be easier. At the same time, legalizing the jobs of marriage brokers also helps to protect the rights of women who participating in international marriage. As so many cases of cheating and lying from broker, as there is the law, there will have a team who looks after this type of activities. Therefore, the rights of citizen will be protected.

Changing in the law recently makes the Vietnamese Government sound less irresponsible in the topic of international marriage. However, steps that the Governments made were still too careful and have not created any strong protection or changes in the society. It is literarily a good sign to show that the Government is participating in the topic of international marriage, which is different from before as they were always participating in a very passive way.

Therefore, in term of policies, an active Korean Government and passive (or careful-approaching) Vietnamese Government seem to be a perfect match in making start for the marriage migration regime of Vietnamese women in South Korea.

Third, brokers and marriage migrants themselves later make the most use of the match on those issued policies. In Korea, as brokers could work freely in the past, they were legal to do promoting program anywhere, even on dramas, at public and get a lot of attention from public. Meanwhile, in Vietnam, only on policy and the Government seem like not too care about the problem help illegal brokers have lots of power on their hand. In South Korea, broker business is usually in term of marriage informative company, which not only matchmaking marriage within the country but also with foreigners. Among that, marriages between Korean men and foreign women are dominant. The women origin is mainly from China, Southeast Asia, and Central Asia. Marriage informative companies create networks with local marriage brokers in bride origins. In the case of Vietnam, since brokers business are illegal, these marriage brokers are individuals as some had been to South Korea before, they can speak Korean, or some even are marriage migrants in South Korea.

Marriage migrant women brokers usually introduce or propose international marriage within their close surrounding of family, relatives and friends. Noteworthy, Vietnamese brokers have a really good relationship with local authorities in order to get the full support during the documents procedure.

Lastly, economic motivation stays as the main reason, even now. It has been nearly twenty years since international marriage had started in Vietnam and boomed as a social phenomenon. The past twenty years witnessed a significant change of the country in economy as the nation has gained their economy situation; reduce poverty, gaining their position in the world. However, there are still so many cases of women decided to get married to a foreigner due to economic condition. Economic motivation still stays as the main reason in many marriages recently, notwithstanding the reason for international is obviously getting more diverse. Seeing women set their life 4000 kilometers far from the hometown with a stranger they just have known for days, we can feel that the economic growth of the country which has been considered as high top of the top do not benefit every person in that society. There are positive stories in which women in those international marriages are increasingly active. They have a well preparation as well as more confident which promise to help them to build a happy multicultural family later and reduce all the chances of risk.

This study contributes to the understanding and implication of ‘migration regime concept’ in the case of marriage migration. The regime concept which is mostly used in work migration which refers to the mobility of labor under governments’ regulations and programs, could be prominently applied in the case of marriage migration. Implicating the marriage migration regime concept helps to understand that the vast marriage migration waves in the world are under the combined influences of many actors, even though, marriage seems to be an individual decision. More specifically, studying the development of the marriage migration regime during the time provides to see how the approach of states – macro-actor towards the topic of migration have changed, how meso-actors – referred to brokers in this study – have been professionalized their jobs, as well as how micro-actors have gained their powers. Thus, the marriage migration regime concept successfully addresses the interactions between macro-, meso- and micro- actors in marriage migration and helps to study the whole picture in various dimensions.

In this study, the regime concept explores the Governments – brokers – marriage migrants interactions within the marriage between Vietnamese women and Korean men. This concept is promisingly to be applied in many other contexts of marriage migration outside South Korea and Vietnam. Further studies can employ this concept to study the combination between these macro-, meso- and micro-actors influencing on the marriage migration. Meanwhile the macro- and micro-actors are supposed to stay the same as in this study as states and migrant themselves, the meso-actor can be different in the particular cases.

Throughout the research, the role of each actor influencing on marriage migration has been illustrated. This research suggests that brokers, which were always demonized in academia, need to be re-viewed in a generous way. Brokers could do such a good work, for example in the case of South Korea, if they are under the right control of legal power. In order to do that, the legal system needs to be adjusted to be close to the reality of marriage migration status in reality. In this case, Vietnamese Government needs to pay attention in the activity of broker. Brokers which were stated as illegal in Vietnam have been out of legal control and took advantage on migrant women. Since we cannot resist the role of brokers and the need of improving their lives of women from rural areas, legalizing broker's activity in order to manage brokers better and protect women better should be considered.

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## **Appendix A: In-depth Interview Questions**

Focusing on Vietnamese marriage migrant women

**General introduction:** age, hometown, the year of arrival in South Korea, marriage status, children

### **How did you get married to your husband?**

- Have you ever thought of living abroad when you were in Vietnam?
- Beside the choice of moving to South Korea, did you have other choices in marriage or jobs?
- Why not Taiwanese, Chinese or Singaporean?
- How had you imagined about life in South Korea before coming?
- Have you had any friend or relative who had been to South Korea before? Did you give you any advice when you made your decision?

### **How did you came to South Korea?**

- How had you prepared to come to South Korea? (cultural, language, etc.)
- What do you think about Korean language and cultural program in Vietnam?

### **Document Procedure.**

- Have you faced any difficulties in completing marriage documents?
- How was the reaction/attitude of the local authorities?
- Have you asked for any help from others while preparing for marriage documents?
- What do you think about the role of brokers in international marriage?

### **Life in South Korea.**

- How is your marriage life now in South Korea?
- What do you think about supporting programs from South Korean Government?
- If you had a friend/relative asking for your advice about marrying a South Korean man, what would you tell them?

## Appendix B: Interviewee List

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Place</b>
1	20/10/2018	Seoul, South Korea
2	27/11/2018	Seoul, South Korea
3	16/12/2018	Seoul, South Korea
4	16/12/2018	Seoul, South Korea
5	10/03/2019	Seoul, South Korea
6	17/03/2019	Seoul, South Korea
7	17/03/2019	Seoul, South Korea
8	21/04/2019	Seoul, South Korea
9	21/04/2019	Seoul, South Korea
10	29/04/2019	Seoul, South Korea
11	15/05/2019	Seoul, South Korea
12	19/05/2019	Seoul, South Korea
13	24/01/2019	Hanoi, Vietnam
14	23/01/2019	Hai Duong, Vietnam
15	29/09/2018	Siheung, South Korea
16	24/01/2019	Hai Duong, Vietnam
17	24/01/2019	Hai Duong, Vietnam
18	24/01/2019	Hai Duong, Vietnam
19	24/01/2019	Hai Duong, Vietnam
20	19/05/2019	Seoul, South Korea

## 국문초록

본 연구는 한국의 베트남 결혼 이주 여성 레짐(regime)에 대한 연구이다. 결혼 이주 레짐은 정부, 중개업자와 결혼이주여성을 포함한다. 의도적이든 의도적이지 않든, 양국 정부의 국제 결혼에 대한 정책이 친근한 환경을 조성하며 결혼 이주 레짐의 기반을 닦아왔다. 동시에, 이를 기반으로 하여 결혼 이민자와 결혼 중개업자가 정책 협력을 파악하고 활용해서 결혼 이주 레짐을 완성한다. 그 결과, 베트남 - 한국 국제 결혼이 정부와 중개업자, 그리고 이주여성의 초국가적 협력관계를 만들게 된다. 레짐 개념은 이주 연구에서 많이 사용되어 왔는데, 주로 이주자에 영향을 미치는 주변 행위자를 연구해 왔으며 동시에 이주 결정 과정에서 이주자의 행위주체성(agency)을 주요 행위자로 간주하기도 했다. 비록 많은 이주 연구가 레짐 개념을 적용하고 있었지만, 대부분은 이주자와 이주 노동자에 초점을 맞추어 왔다. 즉, 결혼 이주자는 개별적인 행동을 취하는 것으로 간주된 것이다.

세계에서 결혼 이주의 주요 흐름 가운데 하나는 베트남 여성과 한국 남성의 결혼이었다. 많은 학자들이 베트남 - 한국 국제 결혼을 연구해 왔다. 이들은 주로 이주의 동기와, 베트남 가정과 베트남 사회의 경제적-사회적 이주의 영향, 그리고 한국 사회에서 그들의 적응력에 초점을 맞췄다. 선행 연구가 결혼 이주의 요인과 문제에 대해 다루었기에 본 연구는 결혼 이주와 관련된 협력을 관찰할 것이다.

이 연구의 질문은 다음과 같다: (1) 정책 규제의 협력이 결혼 이주 레짐을 어떻게 형성했는가? (2) 이주자와 중개업자들은 어떻게 이런 협력을 이용했고 레짐을 발전시켰는가?

위 질문에 답하기 위해 아카이브 연구, 정책 분석, 참여 관찰 및 심층 인터뷰를 수행했다. 한국에 거주하는 베트남인 결혼 이주 여성뿐만 아니라 베트남에서 국제 결혼을 하고자 하는 베트남 여성들을 만나고 인터뷰를 했다. 결과는 다음과 같다.

현장 조사에 근거하여, 본 연구는 결혼 이주를 위한 환경을 조성하는데 두 개의 정부가 의도적이든 의도적이지 않든 비의도적이든 중요한 역할을 한다고 주장한다. 그러한 환경에 대응하여 브로커와 결혼 이주자 스스로가 이러한 협력을 최대한 활용하고 결혼 이주 레짐을 완성한다.



레짐이 발전하는 과정에서 정부의 역할 뿐만 아니라 중개업자의 역할과  
결혼 이주 여성의 자신감과 독립심 향상 또한 확인할 수 있었다.

## **Acknowledgements**

This thesis could not have been completed without the contribution and support of my supervisor, other professors from Department of Geography, Seoul National University, my family and friends.

First and foremost, I would like to express my deep gratitude to my supervisor – Prof. Shin HaeRan, who have guided and encouraged me not only during the time I was writing this thesis, but she has also emotionally and mentally supported my study career and my life in South Korea. Your commitment inspires me to put forth my best effort at every step to finish this thesis as well as to conquer my study dream.

I owe thanks to Prof. Lee Jeongman, who had taught my very first classes at Department of Geography. Your enthusiasm and your sense in research teach me how to view and enjoy the art of cultural researches.

I wish to thanks to Prof. Edo, who has been companied with me since the days when I was new to academia until this day when this thesis is processed to submit. You have been always approachable and caring towards not only me but also other foreign students in our department. I am always thankful for that.

I am specially thankful to all of the professors, faculty members, colleagues and team-members who have guided and walked with me in the two-year journey at our department. I could not reach this goal nor endure the process without the support from any of you.

I have been meeting most amazing people in South Korea, who later became my dearest friends and support me unconditionally. The time in South Korea and the people I met here will always have a special place in my heart.

Lastly, I want to spend my deepest thanks to my Mother and my family. Your unconditional love and support are always my motivation, my strength to do everything in life.

Seoul, July 2019

Bui Thi My Hang